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Agenda items 116 and 121

PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1996-1997

UNITED NATIONS COMMON SYSTEM

Administrative and financial implications of the decisions and recommendations contained in the report of the International Civil Service Commission (A/51/30)

Statement submitted by the Secretary-General in accordance with rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The twenty-second annual report of the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) 1/ contains a number of decisions and recommendations that have financial implications for the regular budget for the biennium 1996-1997, related to the following issues (the reference paragraphs in the ICSC report are indicated in parentheses):

(a) Remuneration of the Professional and higher categories of staff:

(i) Increase in the base/floor salary scale, and restructuring of the scale (paras. 151 and 152);

(ii) Post adjustment system, implementation of the results of the 1995 place-to-place surveys conducted at headquarters and treatment of out-of-area weights (para. 187);

(iii) Dependency allowances (para. 207);

(b) Remuneration of the General Service and other locally recruited categories of staff: survey of best prevailing conditions of employment at Vienna (para. 217);

(c) Conditions of service applicable to all categories of staff:

(i) Education grant (para. 229);

(ii) The mobility and hardship scheme (para. 296).

II. REMUNERATION OF THE PROFESSIONAL AND HIGHER CATEGORIES OF STAFF

A. Base/floor salary scale

2. In section I.H of its resolution 44/198 of 21 December 1989, the General Assembly established a floor net salary level for staff in the Professional and higher categories by reference to the corresponding base net salary levels of officials in comparable positions serving at the base city of the comparator civil service (the federal civil service of the United States of America). The base/floor scale was part of an integrated package of measures in which negative classes of post adjustment were eliminated. It is also used to calculate payments under the mobility and hardship scheme, as well as separation payments. 2/ Adjustments to the salary scale have, since 1990, been made on 1 March every year, with the sole exception of 1996.

3. The current base/floor salary scale became effective on 1 March 1995. As part of its examination of all aspects of the Noblemaire principle, the Commission recommended, in its 1995 annual report, 3/ a net increase of 3.089 per cent to the base/floor scale with effect from 1 March 1996. This net increase would have reflected a gross salary adjustment of 3.22 per cent in the comparator civil service which had taken place as of 1 January 1995. The Commission also recommended a restructuring of the scale with effect from 1 March 1996, which would have accounted for a further increase averaging 1 per cent. That recommendation responded to mandates arising from General Assembly resolutions 47/216 of 23 December 1992 and 48/224 of 23 December 1993. As part of its overall package of measures with regard to the application of the Noblemaire principle, the Commission linked its base/floor salary scale proposals, and the associated restructuring of the scale to the restoration of a net remuneration level of 115, by a proposed scaling forward of post adjustment indices at all duty stations to be effected as of 1 July 1996.

4. The General Assembly did not act on the 1995 recommendations outlined above. Therefore, the Commission, in its 1996 annual report, emphasized the need to link its discussions of the 1997 base/floor adjustment to the recommendations it had made in 1995. At that time, it had recommended an adjustment of 4.1 per cent in the base/floor salary and a scaling forward of post adjustment of 5.1 per cent. These recommendations would have restored the margin to the mid-point of the 110-120 range in 1996 and redressed imbalances in United States/United Nations remuneration ratios and reduced compression at higher levels of the scale by providing wider inter-grade differentials.

5. The Commission noted in 1996 that the situation had evolved since it had made its 1995 recommendations. The net remuneration margin forecast for 1996 currently stands at 109.7. Therefore, the Commission recommended the

implementation of specific modalities for updating its 1995 proposals - to restore the margin to around the mid-point (115) of the range, and to bring forward the proposals for the restructuring of the salary scale provided in the 1995 annual report.

6. The Commission considered that the above-mentioned objectives were consistent with the 1995 recommendations. The 1996 recommendations provide for a scale that would yield an increase of at least 3.1 per cent at each grade and step, and the restructuring of the scale in the same manner recommended in 1995 (average increase of 1 per cent). The consequences of the structural changes and the overall base/floor adjustment would be to move the estimated margin for 1997 to 114.4 and that for 1998 to 115.3, thereby bringing both close to the mid-point of the range.

7. In the context of its 1995 recommendations, the Commission further decided to recommend to the Assembly that the desirable mid-point of 115 for the United Nations/United States net remuneration margin should be restored in 1997. The Commission, therefore, recommended that the net remuneration increase required to restore the mid-point be attained by application of:

(a) An across-the-board increase of 3.089 in the current base/floor salary scale, without consolidation;

(b) A further differential increase of 1 per cent (on average) at various grades/steps of the base/floor salary scale resulting from item (a) above, to implement the scale restructuring proposals made by the Commission in annex X of its 1995 annual report; 3/

(c) A consolidation of 2.51 per cent of post adjustment on a no-loss no-gain basis into the base/floor salary scale in item (a) above to reflect a corresponding increase in net salaries of the comparator effective 1 January 1996.

8. The base/floor scale resulting from items (a) through (c) should be implemented with effect as from 1 March 1997. The financial implications of these recommendations for the United Nations common system as a whole were estimated by ICSC at US$ 72 million in 1997 (increased costs related to pension contributions are included in this figure). The financial implications for the United Nations regular budget have been estimated at $15.1 million for 1997.

B. Staff assessment for tax equalization purposes

9. With regard to the scale of staff assessment for tax equalization purposes, the Commission noted that a substantial surplus of funds in the Tax Equalization Fund, indicated by the United Nations Secretariat, would require a decrease in the related staff assessment rates. This proposed action would have no impact on the conditions of service of Professional and higher categories of staff as the staff assessment rates applied for tax equalization purposes do not affect pensionable remuneration levels. The result of changing these rates would help restore balance in the United Nations Tax Equalization Fund.

10. In paragraph 154 of its twenty-second annual report, the Commission decided to recommend to the General Assembly the revised staff assessment rates for the determination of gross salaries for application to the net salaries of the Professional and higher categories, effective 1 March 1997. Application of the new rates will result in a reduction of requirements under section 32 of the budget, staff assessment, and a reduction under income section 1, income from staff assessment. The specific amounts involved will be reflected by changes in standard costs for the purpose of updating salary projections in the first performance report for the biennium.

C. Post adjustment system

11. The Commission had before it the report of the working group on the operation of the post adjustment system. The group pursued the mandate to identify the elements of pay (expenditures) which should not be indexed for local price charges; to evaluate their relative importance as a percentage of pay; and to study the appropriateness of applying the out-of-area index to some of those elements. The Commission deliberated on the working group's report at great length and considered a wide diversity of views.

12. The Commission decided to inform the General Assembly that, effective 1 March 1997, expenditures corresponding to a minimum amount of 20 per cent of net remuneration (net base salary plus post adjustment) at the duty station, which would be added to 5 per cent of net base salary for the non-consumption component (NCC) would be considered to have been incurred outside the duty station. This will constitute the out-of-area expenditure weight to be used in the calculation of post adjustment indices. The implementation of the Commission's decision will have a further impact on the results of the 1995 cost-of-living surveys conducted at the headquarters duty stations and Washington, D.C., by the Commission, and approved at its thirty-third session. The post adjustment classifications for all these duty stations had already been revised for London, Montreal, Paris, Rome, Vienna and Washington, D.C., effective 1 May 1996, and for Geneva with effect from 1 June 1996.

13. The ICSC decision regarding the treatment of out-of-area weights will have a further impact on the post adjustment classification of the headquarters duty stations that have already been revised to reflect the results of the 1995 cost-of-living surveys. The post adjustment indices of Washington, D.C., and Montreal would experience very slight increases, the post adjustment index for Rome will not be affected and those for Geneva, London, Paris and Vienna will experience reductions. Similar changes in the post adjustment indices and post adjustments of some non-headquarters duty stations, for example, Tokyo, could also be anticipated. As a result of the above-mentioned changes in the post adjustment indices, the Commission has calculated that, with effect from 1 March 1997, there will be net savings of approximately US$ 11 million per annum on a system-wide basis. The savings that would accrue to the regular budget of the United Nations were estimated at approximately $2 million for 1997.

D. Dependency allowances

14. The General Assembly, in its resolution 47/216, took note of the Commission's conclusion in its annual report for 1992 that the existing methodology for determining the level of dependency allowances for the Professional and higher categories should be maintained and computed on the basis of tax abatements and social security payments in the countries of the seven headquarters duty stations, 4/ and that the level of dependency allowances is reviewed every two years to ensure that all relevant changes in the tax and social legislation for the seven headquarters duty stations were taken into consideration.

15. Based on the approved methodology, the percentage increase in payments resulting from tax abatements and social legislation since the 1994 review was calculated at P-4, step VI, showing an increase of 7.98 per cent. Application of this percentage increase to the existing children's allowance would result in annual amounts (rounded) of $1,510 and for disabled children, $3,020.

16. With regard to the secondary dependant's allowance, the Commission recommended applying the same procedure applicable to the existing children's allowance. This would result in an increase in the current level of the secondary dependant's allowance from $500 to $540 per year.

17. The financial implications of the Commission's recommendations in respect of the level of children's and secondary dependant's allowances were estimated at $1,270,000 and $13,500 per year, respectively, system-wide. The implications for the regular budget of the United Nations would be $400,000 in 1997.

18. The Commission decided to recommend to the General Assembly that (a) the current level of children's (including disabled children) and secondary dependant's allowances should be increased, effective 1 January 1997; (b) the present local currency entitlement system for hard-currency duty stations should be maintained on the basis of the same list of hard-currency duty stations for which local currency entitlements were specified; and (c) the amount of dependency allowances should be reduced by the amount of any direct payments received by staff in those countries where the Government makes such direct payments to eligible residents in respect of dependants.

III. REMUNERATION OF THE GENERAL SERVICE AND OTHER LOCALLY RECRUITED CATEGORIES OF STAFF: SURVEY OF BEST PREVAILING CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT AT VIENNA

19. In April 1996, the Commission conducted a survey of best prevailing conditions of employment for staff in the General Service and related categories at Vienna. In this connection, it would be recalled that the Commission, in its 1992 review of the General Service salary survey methodology for headquarters duty stations, had addressed the issue of duty stations, that is, Rome and Vienna, where the local language was not a working language of the organization. Therefore, adjustments had been made in recognition of the difficulty of recruiting local staff with appropriate language skills. However, as the difficulty had gradually diminished, the Commission considered that such

adjustments were no longer necessary. Should that change in the methodology result in survey salaries that were lower than the existing salaries, thereby leading to a freeze, the Commission would consider a phased approach to the elimination of the language factor.

20. In its consideration of the Vienna survey, the Commission noted that the surveyed salaries were already lower than the existing salaries, even without adding a percentage to account for the language factor. The Commission decided that the language factor should be phased out for Vienna by promulgating a scale (survey reference date of April 1996) which already included a reduction of one percentage point for this factor. Thereafter, a similar percentage point reduction should be made at the time of future interim adjustments to ensure that the four-percentage-point language factor would be eliminated by the time of the next survey.

21. The revised salary scale, as a result of the survey, is 3.2 per cent lower than the current scale. The savings to be realized in view of the phasing in of the new scale over the next few years will have no immediate impact, except the withholding of the interim adjustment of 2.47 per cent which would otherwise have been due on 1 April 1996. Associated savings for the United Nations common system were envisaged to be $2.5 million for 1996, and a further savings amounting to $6.4 million will be realized incrementally from 1996 to 1999, at which time the ICSC recommendation would have been fully implemented. A savings of $1.4 million is also envisaged for the United Nations common system relating to the organizations' contributions to the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund as a result of reduced pensionable remuneration levels during the 1996 to 1999 phased implementation. The savings that would accrue to the regular budget of the United Nations would be $900,000 in 1997.

IV. CONDITIONS OF SERVICE APPLICABLE TO ALL CATEGORIES OF STAFF: EDUCATION GRANT*

22. The General Assembly, in section IV of resolution 47/216, endorsed a revised methodology for the determination of the education grant. 5/ In applying the methodology approved by the General Assembly, the Commission decided, at its forty-fourth session, to recommend to the General Assembly the following:

(a) In areas where education-related expenses are incurred in the Swiss franc, the pound sterling, the Italian lira, the Netherlands guilder, the Norwegian krone, the Swedish krona and the United States dollar in the United States of America, the maximum admissible levels for expenses allowed under the education grant system, the maximum education grant and the ceiling for boarding should be as shown below:

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* Applicable as an expatriate benefit only to internationally recruited staff.

Currency	Maximum admissible level	Maximum education grant	Ceiling for boarding, in local currency
		(United States dollars)	
Swiss franc	22 107	16 680	4 913
Italian lira	20 790 000	15 592 500	4 620 000
Norwegian krone	71 632	53 724	15 918
Netherlands guilder	28 836	21 627	6 408
Swedish krona	91 575	68 681	20 350
Pound sterling	12 375	9 281	2 750
United States dollar (in the United States of America)	18 675	14 006	4 166

(b) The maximum amount of admissible expenses, the maximum grant and the ceiling for boarding costs should remain unchanged at current levels for the following currencies: Austrian schilling, Belgian franc, Danish kroner, deutsche mark, Finnish markka, French franc, Irish pound, Japanese yen, Spanish peseta and United States dollar outside the United States;

(c) Pending the in-depth review of the education grant scheduled for 1997, the amount of additional reimbursement of boarding costs for staff at designated duty stations should be as follows for three currency areas where it is currently lower than the normal reimbursement:

Currency	Additional flat rate (at designated duty stations)
Pound sterling	2 500
Italian lira	4 400 000
United States dollar (in the United States)	3 770

(d) The amount of the special education grant for each disabled child should be equal to 100 per cent of the revised amounts of maximum allowable expenses for the regular education grant;

(e) Pending the in-depth review of the education grant scheduled for 1997, it should delegate to the ICSC Chairman the authority to approve a special measure for Beijing that allows for the reimbursement of admissible expenditure

up to the approved level of maximum allowable expenses for the United States dollar/United States area;

(f) All of the above measures would be applicable as from the school year in progress on 1 January 1997.

23. The Commission estimates that the system-wide financial implications of the recommended increases are approximately $590,000 per year in respect of the increase in the maximum admissible expense level, and $233,000 per year in respect of the increase in boarding costs. The financial implications for the regular budget of the United Nations are estimated at $200,000 for 1997.

V. CONDITIONS OF SERVICE IN THE FIELD: REVIEW OF THE MOBILITY AND HARDSHIP SCHEME

24. The mobility and hardship scheme, which took effect on 1 July 1990, was approved by the General Assembly in the context of the 1989/90 comprehensive review of the conditions of service of staff in the Professional and higher categories. The objectives of the scheme were to ensure the recruitment and retention of suitably qualified staff from all Member States, and to respond to the organizations' differing mobility requirements, thereby enabling certain organizations to reassign staff from their headquarters to field locations, and those with high rotation rates to continue to reassign their staff between duty stations throughout the course of their careers. The scheme should bring the compensation for service in the field in line with the remuneration levels provided by the comparator.

25. At the request of the General Assembly, the Commission reviewed the operation of the scheme in 1992. After two years of implementation, the information available confirmed that it was operating efficiently and to the satisfaction of the organizations and staff. The Commission therefore decided to recommend that the parameters of the scheme be maintained unchanged, while signalling its intention to review the scheme again after more experience had been gained in its operation. A report on the review was to be submitted to the General Assembly at its fifty-first (1996) session.

26. The current review, which is framed in terms of the above request, was based on an analysis of the following elements:

(a) The operation of the scheme since its introduction, including cost-benefit and personnel management considerations;

(b) The entitlements applicable in the comparator civil service;

(c) Options for possible modifications to the scheme;

(d) The linkage between the base/floor salary scale and the mobility and hardship allowance.

27. At its forty-third and forty-fourth sessions, the Commission took note of the organizations' overall assessment that the scheme was an effective

management tool that enabled the organizations, particularly those with activities in difficult locations, to discharge their programmes more effectively. It also noted that a survey of staff from a cross-section of field duty stations had found the scheme to be transparent, fair and rational. The Commission concluded that the overall cost of the scheme was reasonable. ICSC was persuaded, on the basis of the extensive data and detailed information provided, that the costs for the scheme had stayed within reasonable bounds. The overall costs system-wide had increased by approximately 1 to 2 per cent per year over the six-year period since the allowance's introduction and, even allowing for the approximate nature of the original costs, this was still a very small change and less than the increases in the movement of the base/floor itself.

28. In reviewing the general matrix and related issues, the Commission considered that the current system with respect to the following three issues had worked well to date and met the needs of the organizations: (a) the current grade band approach for differentiating the level of the mobility and hardship allowance (P-1 to P-3, P-4/P-5 and D-1 and above); (b) the current single/dependant relativities established for the allowance; and (c) the present approach to home leave entitlements, that is, 24-month home leave at H, A and B duty stations, 12-month home leave at C-E duty stations.

29. In reviewing the operation of the hardship element of the allowance, the Commission first considered the relativities between the hardship classifications of the common system and those of the comparator. The Commission also reaffirmed that there were differences between the two systems, as a result of their different activities and mandates. The Commission reviewed possible options for change: the introduction of an intermediate level, and the introduction of an "F" category. The Commission concluded that there was no evidence to suggest that current levels were too high, or that relativities between the present levels were incorrect. The Commission concluded that the present hardship structure had proved effective. Cost increases for this element were stable. It decided, therefore, to recommend that no change be made to the present hardship matrix.

30. The consensus of the Commission was also to maintain the present structure of the mobility element of the matrix and the conditions attaching thereto. The design of the mobility element attempted to strike a balance between different needs: (a) for organizations without rotation policies, and/or with a large proportion of their staff at headquarters, it recognized that the first move was the most difficult to effect; (b) for staff with extensive field networks, which consequently had systematic rotation policies, it made provision for the additional toll exacted by frequent moves, more often than not without a home base. The Commission considered that the mobility element as currently structured worked well in both kinds of situations.

31. The Commission reviewed the data presented on the utilization of the non-removal element. It concluded that the inclusion of this element in the matrix had worked well and facilitated administration for the organizations; moreover, in rotation situations it was cost-effective as compared to the entitlement for a full removal. The Commission, therefore, concluded that the non-removal element should be retained in the matrix. However, the Commission

considered that there was no justification for the open-ended payment of the non-removal element. ICSC decided that, in principle, the non-removal element should be time-limited for a period of five years at one duty station, to be extended to up to seven years on an exceptional basis.

32. With regard to the linkage between the base/floor salary and the mobility and hardship allowance, the Commission decided to recommend that the present linkage to the base/floor salary be retained.

33. With respect to the levels of hazard pay and linkage to the base/floor salary, the Commission decided:

(a) For Professional and higher category staff

To delink hazard pay from the base/floor salary and to review the amounts every two years;

(b) For locally recruited staff

To continue to link hazard pay to the local salary scale at the rate of 20 per cent of the mid-point of the relevant scale. This decision was taken since the Commission felt that hazard pay was not an intrinsic part of the compensation package.

34. As a result of the Commission's decision regarding time limitation on the non-removal element of the mobility and hardship scheme, effective 1 January 1997, reduced expenditures can be expected in the future. Specific amounts involved cannot reliably be projected at this stage.

VI. SUMMARY

35. The financial implications for the regular budget resulting from the decisions and recommendations of ICSC are summarized below:

Summary

(Millions of United States dollars)

	Decisions	Recommendation
Remuneration of the Professional and higher categories of staff		
(a) Base/floor salary scale	-	15.1
(b) Post adjustment system	(2.0)	(-)
(c) Dependency allowances	-	0.4
Remuneration of the General Service category of staff		
(d) Vienna	(0.9)	-
Conditions of service applicable to all categories of staff		
(e) Education grant	-	0.2
(f) Mobility and hardship scheme	-	-
Total	(2.9)	15.7

36. The impact of recommendations to the General Assembly and decisions of the International Civil Service Commission on the regular budget of the United Nations will be included in the first budget performance report for the biennium 1996-1997:

(a) Recommendations, increased requirements estimated at $15.7 million;

(b) Decisions, reduced requirements in the order of $2.9 million.

37. Accordingly, should the General Assembly decide to adopt the recommendations in the report of the International Civil Service Commission, there would be increased requirements under the regular budget in the order of $15.7 million under the sections of expenditure, net of staff assessment reductions which are yet to be computed and reflected in the first budget performance report for the biennium 1996-1997.

Notes

1/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-first Session, Supplement No. 30 (A/51/30).

2/ Ibid., Forty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 30 (A/44/30), vol. II, paras. 118, 119, 316 and 453 (g).

3/ Ibid., Fiftieth Session, Supplement No. 30 and addendum (A/50/30 and Add.1).

4/ Ibid., Forty-seven Session, Supplement No. 30 and corrigendum (A/47/30 and Corr.1), para. 190.

5/ Ibid.

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Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit herewith, for consideration by the General Assembly, a statement adopted by the Administrative Committee on Coordination at its second regular session of 1996.

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ANNEX

Statement by the Administrative Committee on Coordination

The Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) decided to adopt the following statement for submission to the General Assembly:

"The basic tenets of the Charter of the United Nations on the international civil service are unambiguous: 'The paramount consideration in the employment of the staff and in the determination of the conditions of service shall be the necessity of securing the highest standards of efficiency, competence, and integrity' (Art. 101, para. 3).

"The far-reaching transformations taking place in the world and the unprecedented demands being placed on the United Nations system have greatly widened the missions of the United Nations organizations and have led to an unparalleled expansion of the responsibilities of their staff. New, often very complex tasks in insecure living/working environments, especially for staff employed by humanitarian agencies, and mobility in both function and location are the main features of the current work of the international civil service.

"Now more than ever, in order to meet the increasing demands of the international community on the United Nations system, it is essential to have a reinvigorated international civil service of the highest calibre. ACC has repeatedly stressed the critical need, to this end, to restore competitive conditions of service that would enable the organizations of the system, in their diversity, to attract and retain staff of such calibre.

"Most organizations are operating at present under conditions of serious financial constraints and uncertainty. Many are undergoing major reforms and restructuring processes. Restoring competitiveness in conditions of service must be viewed as an integral part of this necessary process of reform, and a key requirement in the search for enhanced productivity and greater cost-effectiveness.

"In its statement addressed to the General Assembly last year in connection with its examination of the report of the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC), ACC stressed that current uncertainties, in respect of both predictable financing and conditions of service, risked undermining meaningful reform and the effective delivery of programmes and services to Member States. ACC urged the General Assembly to adopt the recommendations of ICSC to bring the current margin of remuneration level to the mid-point of its range, and to restructure the salary scale to correct existing imbalances. At the same time, as part of a longer-term strategy to restore competitiveness, ACC members sought action to update the application of the Noblemaire Principle in order to reflect the current realities of the global labour market, and to introduce innovations that would help to motivate staff, reward quality of performance and better reflect the dynamics of organizational change.

"While regretting the decision of the General Assembly to postpone action on these recommendations, ACC understands the circumstances surrounding this decision and welcomes the intention to revert to them at the resumed session. ICSC has now completed the re-examination of its 1995 recommendations, as requested by the General Assembly. It has reconfirmed its technical recommendations related to the measurement of the margin and with regard to the national civil service comparator. The Executive Heads of the member organizations of ACC fully endorse these conclusions. They also strongly support the Commission's decision, as a consequence, to go forward with its recommendation to restore the margin of United Nations to United States net remuneration to its desirable mid-point in 1996. Under the methodology approved by ICSC, this is the second year in succession that net remuneration remains below the lower limit of the range of 110 to 120 established by the General Assembly in its resolution 40/244 of 18 December 1985.

"In the period ahead, it appears increasingly important that there should be simultaneous movements on two fronts: the active, continuing pursuit of efficiency, enhanced performance, including managerial performance, and structural and management reform; and an equally active pursuit by ICSC of the measures required to restore competitive conditions of service through the rebuilding of the Noblemaire Principle. Both of these objectives are part of the established policy of the General Assembly. They both must be pursued vigorously and in a mutually reinforcing way.

"The grave financial situation which the system is undergoing remains of the utmost concern to the Executive Heads. The search for solutions to the financial crisis must be given the utmost priority by the membership. Meanwhile, at the level of the secretariats, no efforts are being spared towards improved management, as well as cost containment, in the face of long-standing budgetary constraints. The system's record in this regard is well established. These efforts will continue in the period ahead. Key conditions for their ultimate success will be flexibility and innovation in staff management and the capacity to attract, motivate and retain the best performers, so as to continue to adhere to the tenets of the Charter with regard to the international civil service. ACC is confident that the membership, as represented in the General Assembly, will demonstrate renewed commitment and support for these essential efforts.

"In urging that action on the ICSC recommendations be taken at the current session, members of ACC reiterate their responsibility for the management of the cost structure of their organizations, as stated in the ACC submission on the subject to the fiftieth session of the General Assembly. Also, as indicated in that statement, modalities and arrangements for implementation may need to vary from organization to organization, in consultation, as necessary, with the respective governing bodies, taking into account resource constraints while fully safeguarding programme resources.

"By acting on the immediate measures recommended by ICSC and giving clear direction towards the longer-term requirement of restoring the

competitive edge of United Nations system remuneration, the General Assembly would give a clear signal of encouragement and support for ongoing efforts, within the framework provided by the common system, to retain staff of the highest calibre and enhance the motivation and performance of staff, as well as for the broader processes under way aimed at managerial reform and maximizing efficiency, productivity and cost-effectiveness, to which all Executive Heads are strongly committed.

"Another requirement for progress on these fronts is the full participation of all partners in the ICSC consultative process. In a period of budgetary cutbacks and other measures affecting job security and conditions of service, and at a time of deepening reforms, when Executive Heads are endeavouring to introduce significant organizational change, it is particularly important that the concerns of staff be articulated at all levels, including that of ICSC. The absence of a dialogue with the Coordinating Committee for Independent Staff Unions and Associations of the United Nations System and the Federation of International Civil Servants Associations in ICSC constitutes an important gap in this regard and a serious obstacle to improving governance and management of change in the common system.

"ACC would also wish to take this opportunity to reiterate its previous recommendations concerning other aspects of the functioning of ICSC."

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UNITED NATIONS COMMON SYSTEM

Note by the Secretary-General

Corrigendum

Annex, page 3

Replace the first paragraph with the following:

"While regretting the decision of the General Assembly, at its fiftieth session, to postpone action on those recommendations, ACC understands the circumstances surrounding that decision. ICSC has now completed the re-examination of its 1995 recommendations, as requested by the Assembly. It has reconfirmed its technical recommendations related to the measurement of the margin and with regard to the national civil service comparator. The Executive Heads fully endorse those conclusions. They also strongly support the Commission's decision, as a consequence, to go forward with its recommendation to restore the margin of United Nations to United States net remuneration to its desirable mid-point in 1996. Under the methodology approved by ICSC, this is the second year in succession that net remuneration remains below the lower limit of the range 110 to 120 established by the General Assembly in its resolution 40/244 of 18 December 1985."

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PROGRAMME PLANNING

Proposed medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001

Letter dated 5 November 1996 from the Chairman of the Second Committee to the Chairman of the Fifth Committee

I have the honour to refer to your letter of 26 September 1996 regarding agenda item 114 (Programme planning), inviting me to bring the matter to the attention of the Second Committee and to convey the views of the Committee on programmes of the proposed medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001 relevant to the work of the Committee.

The Second Committee held a debate on the matter on 17 October 1996. It was requested that subsequent informal consultations be arranged. These were held on 24 October 1996. On the basis of those consultations, it was decided that inputs from interested groups and countries would be conveyed to you. The relevant documents from Costa Rica, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, from Ireland, on behalf of the European Union, from New Zealand, on behalf of Australia, Canada and New Zealand, from the Russian Federation and from the United States of America, are annexed hereto.

(Signed) Arjan HAMBURGER
Chairman
Second Committee of the
General Assembly

Annex

VIEWS OF THE SECOND COMMITTEE ON PROGRAMMES OF THE PROPOSED MEDIUM-TERM PLAN FOR THE PERIOD 1998-2001

[30 October 1996]

Introduction

1. The Group of 77 and China attaches great importance to the examination of this sensitive issue which has a direct impact on the future work of the Organization, since it deals with the programme of work for the period 1998-2001. The Group of 77 and China strongly believes that consideration of item 114 (Programme planning) should be included in the agenda of each of the principal committees of the General Assembly for their respective analysis. In this regard, the Group reaffirms General Assembly resolution 41/213 of 19 December 1986, in which the Assembly clearly asks for appropriate consideration of specific programmes by the competent intergovernmental bodies.

2. The Group of 77 and China requests that future consideration of the item (Programme planning) should include the necessary consultative processes among the main committees of the General Assembly, taking into account the provisions established in General Assembly resolution 41/213.

Programme 5. Policy coordination and sustainable development

3. The Group of 77 and China attaches great importance to the activities implemented under the policy coordination and sustainable development programme. It seems to be drafted in accordance with relevant mandates and the outcome of international conferences. In this regard, the Group of 77 and China believes that the recommendations of the Committee for Programme and Coordination further improve the focus and policy orientation of the programme.

Programme 6. Africa: New Agenda for Development

4. The mid-term review of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s noted that major shortcomings in the implementation of the New Agenda were visible at both the advocacy and the institutional levels because of a lack of clear mandates and policy directions. It is therefore imperative that follow-up and monitoring arrangements be reviewed and strengthened if concrete results are to be achieved by the year 2001.

Subprogramme 6.1. Mobilization of international support and global coordination

5. This subprogramme should also provide for activities that involve the Secretary-General in the sensitization and mobilization of support and resources for the implementation of the New Agenda, in particular the urgent measures and recommendations agreed to at its mid-term review.

Subprogramme 6.2. Monitoring, assessment and follow-up to the implementation of action programmes for African development

6. The subprogramme should also ensure the sustainability of the activities aimed at promoting economic recovery and development in Africa by focusing on the areas of capacity-building and human resources development and by, inter alia, taking into account the outcome of the major international conferences and summits. At the national level, the medium-term plan should aim at ensuring that the urgent measures and recommendations agreed upon at the mid-term review are integrated within the context of country cooperation.

Subprogramme 6.3. The campaign for global awareness of the critical economic situation in Africa

7. In paragraph 6.10, the following text should be added:

"(b) bis To promote and strengthen subregional and regional cooperation and integration through appropriate programmes, especially those identified in the mid-term review."

Programme 8. Development support and management services

8. The recent major international conferences sponsored by the United Nations have established clear goals in key areas of international development cooperation, and have underscored the importance of the greater and more active role of the United Nations in development. The Group of 77 and China attaches special importance to this item and considers that it should be emphasized that the subprogrammes under this programme represent an important component of United Nations technical cooperation, provided on the basis of its universal, voluntary and grant nature, to assist developing countries, especially those in Africa, and the least developed countries, in implementing international commitments derived from the conferences.

9. In this regard, responding to the principal goal of the programme, the Group of 77 and China would like to incorporate the following amendments:

(a) Paragraph 8.1 should be reformulated as follows:

The general purpose of the programme, of which the Department for Development Support and Management Services is in charge is, in the first place, to promote and create a favourable climate for development in every country, particularly in the developing countries and the least developed among them, as well as in the countries with economies in transition. Thus, it should improve and support, by means of technical cooperation, the activities of Member States aimed at strengthening their administrative and financial systems for development, consolidating institutional capabilities and infrastructures and implementing economic and social policies, according to their national development priorities, so as to contribute to sustainable development, concentrating on the needs of the population and the eradication of poverty. To that end, the programme makes available to the developing countries and those with economies in transition technical

know-how and personnel specialized in the fields of public administration and finance, economic and social policy and planning, as well as the planning and management of natural and energy resources;

(b) In view of General Assembly resolution 50/225 of 19 April 1996, which sets out the mandate for the programme, subprogramme 8.1 should be entitled "Public administration, finance and development management";

(c) In subprogramme 8.2, on environment and social development management, it should be mentioned that the lack of financial and technological resources, information and technical knowledge and the debt crisis and unemployment are factors that have a negative impact on the environment and social development, as well as that eradication of poverty is of maximum importance for the developing countries and constitutes a basic condition for attaining sustainable development.

Programme 9. Trade and development

10. The medium-term plan should reflect the overall priority attached to the work of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) as the focal point within the United Nations system for the integrated treatment of development and interrelated issues in the areas of trade, finance, technology, investment and sustainable development.

11. This programme has suffered a major change as a result of the restructuring of UNCTAD. In this context, of particular concern are the modifications introduced to subprogramme 9.5 in document A/51/6 (Prog. 9). This subprogramme was a separate programme under the responsibility of UNCTAD (Programme 15. Least developed, land-locked and island developing countries, and special programmes) in the medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997. The fact that the programme has become a subprogramme is already a matter of grave concern for this group of countries and for the Group of 77 and China in general, and is contradictory to the mandates of the major United Nations conferences.

12. In this regard, the Group of 77 and China proposes the following:

(a) In paragraph 9.7 (d), to add the words "land-locked developing countries and small island developing States" after the words "least developed countries";

(b) In paragraph 9.12 (d), to add the words "in particular the least developed and land-locked developing countries and small island developing States" after the words "developing countries";

(c) In paragraph 9.13, to add a new subparagraph to read:

"(d) bis To assist the least developed and land-locked developing countries and small island developing States to overcome the special problems they face in developing enterprises";

(d) To add the words "land-locked developing countries and small island developing States" to the title of subprogramme 9.5;

(e) Paragraph 9.20 should be completely revised so as to retain most of former programme 15, taking into account the mandates of recent General Assembly resolutions and the outcomes of United Nations conferences, in particular the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States.

13. Finally, the Group of 77 and China requests the Secretary-General to submit the revised proposed programme 9 on trade and development, taking fully into account the results of the forty-third session of the Trade and Development Board.

Programme 11. Human settlements

14. The Group of 77 and China hopes that the Secretary-General will submit a revised proposed programme on human settlements, in the light of the results of Habitat II, in order to allow the Member States of the General Assembly to assess the programme and to take a final decision thereon.

REGIONAL COMMISSIONS

15. The Group of 77 and China attaches great importance to the role that the regional commissions play in the economic and social areas of the United Nations.

16. The regional commissions have the important role of incorporating the regional dimension in the programmes and activities of the United Nations. Furthermore, in view of the fact that these entities are knowledgeable about specific situations in their regions, they are capable of responding in an efficient and effective manner to the specific assistance needs of each country in areas of concern.

17. Furthermore, the commitments and agreements adopted by recent United Nations conferences give additional responsibilities to the regional commissions in order to assist Member States in the implementation of such commitments and agreements.

18. In this regard, we reject any proposals to transfer the functions of the regional commissions to other institutions, which would diminish the role of the regional commissions.

Programme 14. Economic and social development in Africa

19. The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), in addition to its traditional role, chairs the Inter-Agency Task Force on African Economic Recovery and Development and is responsible for the effective implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s at the regional level.

Subprogramme 14.4. Harnessing information for development

20. This programme should clearly provide for activities aimed at implementing the New Agenda and incorporating the results of the action taken into the intergovernmental process.

Subprogramme 14.5 Promoting regional cooperation and integration

21. This subprogramme should include activities aimed at implementing the urgent measures and recommendations agreed to at the mid-term review of the New Agenda, relating to programmes to promote subregional and regional cooperation and integration, particularly in the areas of transport and communications, commodity diversification and capacity-building.

Programme 15. Economic and social development in Asia and the Pacific

22. The proposed programme conforms generally with the legislative mandates pertinent to the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). It broadly captures the trends and prevailing conditions in the Asia and Pacific region.

23. Although the focus of the proposed programme on the three major themes of regional economic cooperation, environment and sustainable development, and poverty alleviation, is welcomed, there may be a need to sharpen the subprogramme elements further to better reflect desired activities in conformity with relevant legislative mandates, including the recently held United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II).

24. Appropriate provision should be made to enable the programme to take into account a reorientation of activities within the plan period as a result of the internal restructuring currently under way in ESCAP.

25. In this regard, the Group of 77 and China proposes the following:

(a) South-South cooperation, including the triangular modality of collaboration, should receive the highest priority in terms of guiding specific activities to achieve the objectives of subprogrammes 15.1 (Regional economic cooperation: trade and investment), 15.2 (Regional economic cooperation: research and policy analysis) and 15.3 (Regional economic cooperation: industry and technology);

(b) To add the following text to paragraph 15.4:

"It will emphasize South-South cooperation, including the triangular modality of collaboration, to guide specific activities to achieve the objectives of the various subprogrammes";

(c) In paragraph 15.6 to replace the words "with support from developed countries, that is, tripartite cooperation" with the words "with appropriate support from developed countries, as well as from United Nations agencies, funds and programmes";

26. Critical to the strengthening of national capacities in achieving environmentally sound and sustainable development is the access to environmentally friendly or sound technology and the provision of environmentally sound infrastructure in human settlements. Hence, the provisions of Agenda 21 relative to access of such technology should find concrete expression in subprogramme 15.4, Environment and sustainable development. Account should also be taken of the results of Habitat II. In this regard, the Group of 77 and China proposes the following changes:

(a) In paragraph 15.11, to replace the words "that have emerged since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992 and on the Secretary-General's Agenda for Development" with the words "that have emerged from recent global conferences such as the World Summit for Social Development, held at Copenhagen and Habitat II in Istanbul";

(b) After paragraph 15.11 (d), to add a new subparagraph to read:

"(d) bis To work with Governments and regional and international associations of local authorities, non-governmental organizations, the private sector, academic institutions and other regional or subregional groupings to develop regional human settlements plans of action addressing priority issues specific to the Asia and Pacific region";

(c) After paragraph 15.11 (g), to add a new subparagraph to read:

"(g) bis To promote opportunities that will enable developing countries to acquire environmentally friendly or sound technology to contribute to the strengthening of national capacities in achieving sustainable development."

Programme 17. Economic and social development in Latin America and the Caribbean

27. The Group of 77 and China considers that programme 17 seems to be drafted in accordance with the relevant mandates. However, the Group would like to stress that the restructuring process of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean is a direct responsibility of its member States and, in this regard, the medium-term plan should reflect the priorities stated in document LC/G.1942.

Programme 18. Economic and Social Development in Western Asia

28. The Group of 77 and China considers that programme 18 reflects the relevant mandates of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA). Concerning the process of restructuring, considerable efforts have already been achieved. The Group would also like to stress that the restructuring process of ESCWA is a direct responsibility of its member States.

European Union

[30 October 1996]

Preliminary remarks

1. The European Union is prepared to comment briefly on programmes 5 to 11 and 14 to 18 of the proposed medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001 set out in the relevant accompanying documents to document A/51/6. However, in keeping with its view that consideration of the medium-term plan is primarily a matter for the Fifth Committee, taking into account the recommendations of the Committee for Programme and Coordination, the European Union will confine itself at this stage to general remarks. In this regard, it notes the consensus reached in the Committee for Programme and Coordination. More detailed comments of the European Union, as well as its views on other programmes, will be conveyed in the Fifth Committee. In accordance with the invitation of the Chairman of the Fifth Committee to ensure that programmes of relevance to the work of the Second Committee are considered by the latter, the representatives of the European Union in the Second Committee are taking the opportunity to consult with and brief their Fifth Committee colleagues to ensure that the Second Committee dimension and concerns of its European Union members are fully accommodated in the Fifth Committee.

2. The European Union is of the view that the medium-term plan should reflect the political parameters established in recent United Nations conferences, promote their integrated implementation and assess the organizational needs, including administrative budget, to facilitate the implementation of the commitments. In this context, it notes that the General Assembly, in its resolution 50/227, agreed that the role and working methods of the Committee for Programme and Coordination should be reviewed with a view to finding ways of improving programme coordination functions.

Programme 5. Policy coordination and sustainable development

Programme 7. Economic and social information and policy analysis

Programme 8. Development support and management services

General comments

3. Before turning to the details of the three programmes mentioned above, which relate to the activities of the current three departments in the economic, social and related areas, the European Union would like to make a general comment on the organization of the Secretariat.

4. The European Union is convinced that the role of the United Nations in the field of development activities would be substantially strengthened if the three secretariat departments with responsibilities in this area were to be merged under the authority of a single Under-Secretary-General responsible for policy formulation and coordination in the fields of sustainable development and economic cooperation, while coherence and coordination of operational activities should also be appropriately enhanced through the strengthening of the relevant

secretariat function. Delegates will recall that the European Union has tabled proposals to this effect in the Agenda for Development exercise.

5. Acceptance of these proposals would, of necessity, require a rewriting of the programmes under discussion. While this is not feasible in the time-frame that we have, the Union's views on the individual programmes will be framed with its general comments in mind.

Programme 5. Policy coordination and sustainable development

6. The programme makes only passing reference to the central coordinating function of the Economic and Social Council and little reference to the key role of the Administrative Committee on Coordination. While drafted before the adoption of resolution 50/227, its omission of any more detailed reference to these bodies is surprising. Subprogramme 5.1 could be revised accordingly.

7. On sustainable development, the programme addresses the purpose and functioning of the Division on Sustainable Development. This is a key Division in the area of the follow-up to the Rio Conference and to the other major conferences on development issues. It would have been desirable if there had been more emphasis on the people-centred nature of sustainable development.

8. The Union believes that the Division has a role in monitoring developments relating to the implementation of the intergovernmental conventions dealing with various aspects of sustainable development agreed to in recent years.

Programme 6. Africa: New Agenda for Development

9. The European Union supports the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s and played an active role at the recent mid-term review in seeking to ensure that the focus for the remaining period of the Agenda should be on implementation. In this context, the Special Initiative for Africa is an important initiative of the United Nations and its implementation should be properly reflected in the medium-term plan. With these comments, the European Union supports programme 6 as outlined but would query whether there is possible duplication of activities between subprogrammes 1 and 3. Both seem to be dealing largely with the same area, namely, the mobilization of international support and awareness of the critical economic situation of Africa. The Union would also ask whether the activities of the Department of Public Information could not be covered under that Department's budget.

Programme 7. Economic and social information and policy analysis

10. There seems to be a good deal of similarity between subprogrammes 7.3 and 7.4. In subprogramme 7.3, for example, in paragraph 7.8 (c), the objectives are defined as assisting "Member States and intergovernmental bodies in the early identification of new and emerging issues". In subprogramme 7.4, in paragraph 7.10 (b), its objectives are to "enable the world community to respond to persistent problems and emerging issues in socio-economic development". Perhaps there is scope for rationalizing these subprogrammes.

Programme 8. Development support and management services

11. There should have been a more explicit reference to the outcome of the resumed session of the General Assembly devoted to public administration and development, held in April 1996, and to ways in which the Department was planning to focus its activities in the areas identified in resolution 50/225.

12. There would appear to be a case for reviewing the scope of subprogramme 8.2 dealing with environment and social development management in the light of subprogramme 5.4 dealing with the issue of sustainable development.

Programme 9. Trade and development

13. The European Union would expect that the programme should reflect the results of the ninth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. The Union is pleased that consensus was reached on a revised programme at Geneva and it notes that the matter is now taken account of in the official text of the revised programme.

Programme 10. Environment

14. The Union, at this stage, is in agreement with the broad terms of this programme and sees no need at the present time to make comments on its contents.

Programme 11. Human settlements

15. The European Union is awaiting a revised text, as requested by the Committee for Programme and Coordination, reflecting the consensus reached at Habitat II. It wishes the revised text to be consistent with the outcome of the Istanbul Conference.

Programmes 14 through 18

16. The Union is broadly in agreement with the terms of these programmes.

17. However, it notes that implementation of the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences is given low priority in some of the programmes and none in others. The Union would wish to see emphasis placed on the need for an integrated follow-up to these conferences. It also notes that there are few references to the processes of internal reform which the regional commissions have indicated that they have embarked upon and wishes the programmes to take these reforms fully into account.

Australia, Canada and New Zealand

1. It is the understanding of the countries comprising Australia, Canada and New Zealand that the medium-term plan is not a legislative mandate in itself but can and should be a powerful tool for member States and the Secretary-General alike to plan, programme, budget, control and evaluate the implementation of legislative mandates. The plan does not constitute an opportunity for the renegotiation of previously agreed mandates.

2. The Group's understanding derives from programme planning regulation 3.2, which clearly states "the medium-term plan shall be a translation of legislative mandates into programmes. Its objectives and strategies shall be derived from the policy orientations and goals set by the intergovernmental organs".

3. It is important for delegates in all the Main Committees to be aware of the practical impact of their political decisions on the work of the Organization, and its finances. To this end, it is useful for delegates to be aware of the provisions in the medium-term plan that relate to their areas of work. However, keeping in mind that the plan is a general guide for the use of the Secretariat, the group does not think it appropriate for each of the Main Committees to pass judgement on the minute details of the medium-term plan.

4. The Organization already has appropriate mechanisms for considering the medium-term plan. Member States can express their views on the plan in the Committee for Programme and Coordination (the terms of reference of which are set out in Economic and Social Council resolution 2008 (LX) of 14 May 1976) and in the Fifth Committee. In these forums Member States are able to ensure that the plan reflects the key programme areas enshrined in the budget and that it takes into account all the relevant legislative mandates.

Russian Federation

1. The Russian Federation welcomes this opportunity to express its opinion on programme planning in accordance with the procedure provided for in General Assembly resolution 41/213.

2. The Russian Federation joined the consensus at the thirty-sixth session of the Committee on Programme and Coordination on the programmes of the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001 related to the work of the Second Committee. In this connection, it has no particular comments on the programmes of the medium-term plan referred to above. Russian delegates in the Second and Fifth Committees will be in consultation when these programmes are discussed in the Fifth Committee.

3. At the same time, the Russian Federation would like to take this opportunity to share some ideas on the matter. It sees the need to improve the intergovernmental consultative process in the area of programme planning. Although the mechanism for this exists through the premises of the Committee for Programme and Coordination, the Economic and Social Council, the provisions of resolution 41/213 and the General Assembly, it sees a strong need to adjust it in line with the realities of the present and taking into account the provisions of recent resolutions adopted in the United Nations, in particular General Assembly resolution 50/227.

4. The Russian Federation is of the view that, in accordance with the above-mentioned resolution, the working methods of the Committee for Programme and Coordination should be reviewed to utilize it more fully in the area of programme planning and coordination. The Russian Federation considers that programme-related issues should be discussed thoroughly at the spring session of the Committee for Programme and Coordination and the results of that discussion

should be transmitted to the Economic and Social Council for consideration at its next substantive session under the agenda item on programme planning.

5. There should be no discussion of or negotiations on these issues during the work of the Main Committees of the General Assembly apart from the Fifth Committee where decisions are adopted. Exceptions should be made when new issues arise that could not have been taken into account during the sessions of the Committee for Programme and Coordination or the Economic and Social Council or that need adjustment (e.g., the current programmes on trade and development and human settlements). The Council should be the main United Nations body to consider programme planning and coordination and take note of the decisions adopted by the Committee for Programme and Coordination for consideration and approval by the Fifth Committee.

6. This, however, should not prevent countries from expressing their opinions on issues of particular interest to them through a letter from the Chairman of the Second Committee to the Chairman of the Fifth Committee, in accordance with the provisions of resolution 41/213. These opinions could be individual or group opinions without holding negotiations on the subject.

United States of America

[1 November 1996]

The United States of America participated in the negotiations in the Committee for Programme and Coordination on the proposed medium-term plan for 1998-2001. The report reflecting the work of the Committee (A/51/16 (Part II)), the document of record that has been referred to the Fifth Committee, accurately reflects the substantive views of the United States on those programmes referred to the Second Committee for comment.

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PROGRAMME PLANNING

Programme 1, Political affairs, of the proposed medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001

Letter dated 25 October 1996 from the Chairman of the First Committee to the President of the General Assembly

With reference to your letter dated 26 September 1996 concerning programme 1 of the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001, as set out in document A/51/6 (Prog. 1), I would like to inform you that the First Committee of the General Assembly convened a special meeting on 21 October 1996 in order to provide an opportunity for delegations to express their views on that subject.

I have the pleasure to submit for the consideration of the Fifth Committee the texts of written comments prepared by the representatives of Brazil, Cuba, Indonesia (on behalf of the States Members that are members of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries), Ireland (on behalf of the States Members that are members of the European Union), Oman, Mexico, South Africa and the United States of America.

(Signed) Alyaksandr SYCHOU
Chairman
First Committee of the General Assembly

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Annex

VIEWS OF THE FIRST COMMITTEE ON PROGRAMME 1, POLITICAL AFFAIRS, OF THE PROPOSED MEDIUM-TERM PLAN FOR THE PERIOD 1998-2001

Brazil

[Original: English]

[21 October 1996]

1. The delegation of Brazil considers that a structured, in-depth well-prepared discussion of the activities of the United Nations in the area of disarmament should be an integral part of the work of the First Committee. This is in line with our position that the Main Committees of the General Assembly should focus their work on issues of greater practicality and importance.

2. In order to comment on the proposed medium-term plan, it is necessary to recall some of the main factors affecting the political work of the United Nations in the last five years. This has been a period of deep changes in the international system, during which old concepts and ideas have lost relevance and a new way of thinking has become necessary.

3. We thank the Secretary-General for taking the lead in proposing a new conceptual framework for the United Nations, notably in the reports entitled "An Agenda for Peace" (A/47/277-S/24111), "New dimensions of arms regulation and disarmament in the post-cold-war era" (A/C.1/47/7) and "Supplement to an Agenda for Peace" (A/50/60-S/1995/1.

4. However, some conceptual confusion persists, which is only natural, given the wide range of the changes in the international system. The General Assembly has addressed this question to a considerable extent, and has contributed to clarification in some areas, notably in resolutions 47/120 A of 18 December 1992 and 47/120 B of 20 September 1993 on An Agenda for Peace. We encourage reference to these resolutions in future redrafting of the medium-term plan.

5. We would like now to refer specifically to three areas that have a direct impact on the medium-term plan.

6. The first conceptual problem is one that has already been clarified by the Secretary-General himself. It is the confusion between peacekeeping and peace enforcement. It is not necessary to dwell on the tragic events that showed the need to make a clear distinction between these two activities. In paragraph 36 of the Supplement to an Agenda for Peace, the Secretary-General states - and we thoroughly agree - that peacekeeping and the use of force (other than in self-defence) should be seen as alternative techniques and not as adjacent points on a continuum, permitting easy transition from one to the other.

7. The second area where there is need for clarification is the distinction between preventive diplomacy and preventive deployment. Preventive diplomacy is diplomacy; preventive deployment is peacekeeping. We should not mistake one for the other. It is necessary to avoid bundling together all sorts of activities, in areas such as traditional diplomacy, peacekeeping, peace enforcement,

development cooperation, electoral assistance, etc., under the vague idea of "preventive action". One consequence of such lack of clarity is an over-ambitious approach in a time of financial and political constraint for the United Nations.

8. The third area in need of clarification is the distinction between post-conflict peace-building and development activities in general. The range of activities that may be necessary and appropriate, in the case of assistance to societies that have been torn apart by conflict, has a much broader scope, and is often qualitatively different, than regular development assistance. Lack of clarity in this case may lead to excessive ambition on the part of the United Nations and failed expectations on the part of States, as well as further conceptual confusion, as in the abuse of the term "preventive peace-building". We therefore request that the expression "post-conflict" be added whenever "peace-building" appears in programme 1.

9. Turning now to subprogramme 1.3, Disarmament, we note that paragraph 1.13 gives an erroneous impression of recent developments in the disarmament area. Its basic message is that all goes well in the nuclear area; however, "problems related to conventional weapons ... continue to pose a threat to international security". This assertion contradicts directly the following documents:

(a) The report of the Secretary-General entitled "New dimensions of arms regulation and disarmament in the post-cold-war era" (A/C.1/47/7), inter alia, in paragraphs 9, 21, 24 and 27 (which could be used to amend paragraph 1.13);

(b) The report of the Secretary-General entitled "Supplement to an Agenda for Peace" (A/50/60-S/1995/1), paragraphs 57 and 60, in which it is stated that "disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation, with special reference to weapons of mass destruction" are of "paramount importance";

(c) The answer of the Security Council to the Supplement to an Agenda for Peace (S/PRST/1995/9), in which it is stated, inter alia, that "the Security Council shares the Secretary-General's assessment of the paramount importance of preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction";

(d) At the fiftieth session of the General Assembly only, resolutions 50/65, 50/66, 50/70 A, C, I, N, P, R and 50/71 E, all of 12 December 1995;

(e) The latest report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization (A/51/1), inter alia, in paragraphs 1079 and 1080.

10. In paragraph 1.15 of the programme, the reason for the priority given to "post-disarmament problems" is not clear. The implication is that disarmament issues are no longer a priority. It is also difficult to see the reason why "particular attention will be paid" to the maintenance of "regional variants" of the Register of Conventional Arms, since (a) such variants do not exist, (b) if they existed they should be maintained primarily by regional arrangements and (c) any eventual support from the United Nations would have to be mandated first by the General Assembly.

11. Paragraph 1.16 places an excessive emphasis on the role of the United Nations in regional disarmament. It must be said that regional disarmament is a good thing, but this is an area in which the role of the United Nations is

necessarily secondary compared with the role of regional mechanisms. This language could be replaced by paragraph 15 of the "New dimensions" report (A/C.1/47/7), which establishes an adequate balance between global, regional and subregional efforts.

12. In paragraphs 1.17 and 1.18, specific mention should be made to the continuity of the publication of the United Nations Disarmament Yearbook and to the maintenance of the United Nations Disarmament Fellowship Programme, which enjoy universal support and are of particular importance for developing States.

Cuba

[Original: Spanish]

1. My delegation wishes, first of all, to express its full support for the statement to be delivered by the delegation of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, with which we fully agree.

2. The delegation of Cuba welcomes the fact that our Committee is taking some time from its tight schedule to consider a topic that we believe to be of vital importance.

3. On previous occasions, and despite complaints by some delegations, our Committee has not considered the proposed medium-term plan and the corresponding programme on disarmament. Our role has been confined to transmitting the views of some delegations to the body responsible for considering and adopting the proposed medium-term plan.

4. We are confident that every delegation here is aware of the extreme importance of what we are called on to consider, for it is - no more and no less - the programmatic basis of the course that the Organization will follow during the period 1998-2001 in the field of disarmament.

5. The many efforts and useful initiatives that we have been considering in our Committee will not produce results if they are adopted merely as resolutions and the concepts they embody are not subsequently incorporated into the Organization's programme and do not receive sufficient support when the budget comes under discussion.

6. That is why the consideration and analysis of the various programmes by the relevant intergovernmental bodies is an essential exercise. We note with great concern that some delegations are opposed to this exercise, maintaining that such analysis is not the province of our Committee but rather of the Fifth Committee.

7. In this connection, my delegation wishes to point out that the Regulations Governing Programme Planning provide for the consideration of the proposed medium-term plan by the relevant intergovernmental bodies, taking into account their knowledge and experience in these areas, in addition to their overall view of what the priorities should be in each particular area; in our case, it is the area of disarmament.

8. Therefore, today we are merely complying with established practice. My delegation regrets that the First Committee has not been properly advised with regard to its responsibility in this matter, which has prevented it from allocating in its programme of work the time necessary to give serious and thorough consideration to a programme that concerns the Committee.

9. This question must also be duly transparent insofar as methodology is concerned. My delegation believes that the circulation in our Committee of the documents relating to this topic should be improved, as it would contribute to a better understanding of the question by all delegations.

10. With regard to substantive aspects, we wish to look more closely at a few elements, inter alia, the format of the subprogramme. We firmly support the idea, which was reflected in the medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997, that disarmament should constitute a separate programme and not a mere subprogramme, as is now being proposed.

11. There is no need to reiterate here the major tasks that we all believe are incumbent on the Organization in this field. Beyond the question of whether or not there is a concurrence of views, this is also reflected in the large number of draft resolutions introduced and adopted every year and which, as we know, has increased somewhat in the past three years.

12. The proposed programme, as indicated in the statement on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, must be a true reflection of the mandates approved by Member States in their decisions, thus embodying the delicate balance represented by the sum total - and not merely some - of our many decisions.

13. The proposed medium-term plan cannot become a vehicle for adopting and implementing ideas and concepts that Member States have neither considered nor approved. Stock phrases may be formulated in some distinguished office and trendy concepts may originate in certain parts of the world but here we are neither in a publishing house nor in an art gallery but rather under the roof of an Organization created for everyone, in which everyone has a voice and a vote. In accordance with the rules of procedure that we have adopted, our decisions alone constitute - and should constitute - the mandate to be implemented.

14. There are objectives and goals that the international community has set for itself long ago. However, despite the fact that so much emphasis has been placed on the end of the cold war, these goals remain unattainable and seem to become more remote with each passing day. The ban on nuclear weapons and their elimination is a clear-cut example of this; nevertheless, the proposed plan does not call for the establishment of a convention prohibiting nuclear weapons and their use.

15. Much remains to be done in order to attain the goal of general and complete disarmament. This Committee's majority decision in favour of nuclear disarmament, the important opinion handed down by the International Court of Justice and the phased programme for the elimination of nuclear weapons within a time-bound framework, introduced by the Group of 21 in the Conference on Disarmament, doubtless form a context in which the United Nations must play a vital role in the coming years.

16. With regard to weapons of mass destruction, it will be recalled that, following lengthy and difficult negotiations, our countries agreed on a convention on the prohibition of chemical weapons, which covers everything from their production to their use and even their destruction. Nonetheless, as we know, the Convention has not yet been ratified by the two States with the largest stockpiles, even as it is about to enter into force. This is another area that the proposed medium-term plan should treat more thoroughly.

17. In the light of the foregoing, it is difficult to understand why such inordinate emphasis is being placed on conventional disarmament.

18. Among other questions, there is a reference to the maintenance of the Register of Conventional Arms, including possible regional variants. It would seem that the agreed principle that regional measures must be an initiative of the States of the region in question and taken with their full agreement and participation is no longer valid, and that the Organization, without any resolution on the subject, is now imposing such agreements and regional registers on us.

19. One final example of an area of the proposed medium-term plan that should also be changed is the provision of training and advisory services in the field of disarmament. The annual scholarship programme conducted by the Secretary-General for the benefit of all Member States and, in particular, the developing countries, which has made it possible to increase the number of experts in this field among the States Members of the Organization, seems doomed to be eliminated in the coming years, since it is not even mentioned in the text.

20. In view of the foregoing, my delegation believes that proposed subprogramme 1.3 on disarmament should be redrafted in the light of the views expressed during this discussion, and submitted to the body responsible for its final adoption once the current draft has been amended.

21. These are some of our thoughts on the topic under discussion today. We hope that they will be duly taken into account.

Indonesia*

[Original: English]

[23 October 1996]

1. In the view of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, subprogramme 1.3, Disarmament, should be treated in a separate and distinct programme in the medium-term plan. It is important that the programme reflect the general thrust of numerous resolutions on various disarmament issues adopted by the General Assembly prior to their formulation. It is of equal importance that the viewpoint of an overwhelming majority of the Member States be indicated. The Movement of Non-Aligned Countries therefore calls for a reassessment of the approaches contained in the programme and a conscious adjustment of the issues

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* On behalf of the States Members that are members of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

involved in order to more accurately reflect the viewpoints and positions of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries which constitute a majority in the Organization.

2. The programme on disarmament should be guided by the basic premise and framework contained in the Final Document adopted by the General Assembly at its first special session devoted to disarmament. There can be no doubt that the principles and priorities contained therein continue to retain their validity and relevance. There exists, as in many agreements and recently reiterated by the unanimous decision by the International Court of Justice, the obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control. It follows then that ultimate and complete elimination of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction must be accorded priority. In this context, the programme should also take into account the need for the Conference on Disarmament to establish, on a priority basis, an ad hoc committee to commence negotiations on a phased programme of nuclear disarmament and for the ultimate and complete elimination of nuclear weapons within a time-bound framework.

3. The future agenda for non-proliferation in all its aspects and nuclear disarmament, for the States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, has gained new impetus by the adoption of the principles and objectives as contained in the documents adopted by the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Despite this recent development and positive changes in international relations over the last few years, nuclear weapons still continue to threaten international security. Nuclear arsenals are constantly being improved for greater accuracy and annihilating capabilities, while new nuclear doctrines are being advanced.

4. The highest priority for the international community, therefore, should remain the ultimate and complete elimination of nuclear weapons as laid down in the Final Document of the first special session devoted to disarmament. The agenda should also include measures on the elimination of the other weapons of mass destruction, in particular chemical and biological weapons, through the full implementation of relevant disarmament treaties.

5. The Movement of Non-Aligned Countries stresses the urgency of the need to curb the excessive production, development and build-up of conventional armaments through global and regional approaches agreed freely among the States of the region, taking into account the legitimate requirement of States for self-defence and the specific characteristics of each region. In this connection, it is important that the question of conventional arms control and disarmament be accorded an appropriate place in the programme.

6. New ideas to extend the role of disarmament as a tool of preventive diplomacy and peace-building must be approached with caution and circumspection. This is because such an approach may well divert attention from the implementation of agreements already reached in resolving priority issues. Hence, the task of the United Nations would be to formulate programmes of disarmament that impact on the critical interests of a vast majority of Member States in a balanced manner.

Ireland*

[Original: English]

[17 October 1996]

The European Union recognizes that priority setting for the programmes of the United Nations is very important. In this context, the consideration of agenda item 114 will take place in the Fifth Committee. Accordingly, the delegates from the European Union member States in the First Committee, to ensure an effective response, will act in concert with their respective Fifth Committee colleagues with a view to formulating a European Union position on the various programmes in the Fifth Committee.

Mexico

[Original: Spanish]

The delegation of Mexico fully supports the statement delivered by the delegation of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries on this matter. It also supports the statements made by the delegations of Cuba, Brazil and South Africa in this regard.

The delegation of Mexico believes that the content of document A/51/6 (Prog. 1) on subprogramme 1.3, Disarmament, is inadequate. The six paragraphs describing the Organization's future activities for 1998-2001 are insufficient, since they do not reflect the very high priority that Member States accord to disarmament. Moreover, the treatment of nuclear disarmament and conventional disarmament in the subprogramme is not balanced.

The delegation of Mexico is in favour of retaining a separate and autonomous programme on disarmament. The content of the programme must reflect the activities mandated by the Member States, as well as the comments made by various delegations during the current session.

Oman

[Original: English]

Oman associates itself with the position adopted by the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries with respect to the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001. It also would like to emphasize the importance it attaches to the need to have greater attention accorded to nuclear issues.

We believe that document lacks focus when it comes to regional disarmament.

We are of the view that when it comes to the region of the Middle East, the United Nations should include in its programme concrete steps on how to ensure the universality of the non-proliferation regime, which is in our opinion one of

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* On behalf of the States Members that are members of the European Union.

the means towards strengthening peace and security in the region. Moreover, the plan does not contain any measures on how to improve coordination and consultations with other regional organizations, such as the League of Arab States and the Gulf Cooperation Council. We believe the United Nations should embark on a continuous dialogue with those organizations to arrive at viable suggestions and recommendations on how to go about achieving regional disarmament.

South Africa

[Original: English]

[21 October 1996]

1. Recent years have seen many accomplishments in the area of disarmament. On the multilateral and global level, this has ranged across:

(a) The conclusion, and now imminent entry into force, of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction;

(b) The indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the adoption by the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons of the decisions for a strengthened review process and the Principles and Objectives for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament;

(c) The work which is being done by the States parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction to strengthen the Convention by establishing a verifiable compliance regime;

(d) The strengthening of the network of nuclear-weapon-free zones with the recent conclusion of the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty (Treaty of Pelindaba) and the Treaty of Bangkok, which have had the effect of extending nuclear-weapon-free zones to cover the entire southern hemisphere. These initiatives are a clear demonstration of the continued commitment of non-nuclear-weapon States to the goal of ridding the world of nuclear weapons;

(e) The conclusion and signing of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. The support that this Treaty has is demonstrated by the overwhelming majority by which it was adopted in the General Assembly and by the large number of States signatories that it has attracted;

(f) The recent advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons;

(g) The agreement that was reached on guidelines for international arms transfers at the 1996 session of the Disarmament Commission;

(h) The successful conclusion of the 1996 Review Conference of the States Parties to the Convention on Prohibitions and Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have

Indiscriminate Effects with the adoption of an amended Protocol II on landmines and the addition of the new Protocol IV on blinding laser weapons.

2. There is also much thought being given to the future. While we have seen significant progress in recent years in the area of disarmament, many important and significant tasks remain ahead of us. Here it is worthwhile to mention what has and is being done:

(a) On a future agenda for nuclear disarmament, which for South Africa remains the primary focus in disarmament, by for example the Canberra Commission report and the proposed programme of action for the elimination of nuclear weapons;

(b) The work on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons;

(c) By the Ad Hoc Group established by the States parties to the Biological Weapons Convention;

(d) In terms of General Assembly resolution 50/70 B of 12 December 1995 on small arms by the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms;

(e) To give the necessary international focus to the devastation being created by anti-personnel landmines. Here a major initiative was taken in the recent Declaration of the Ottawa International Strategy Conference: "Towards a Global Ban on Anti-Personnel Mines", held at Ottawa, Canada, from 3 to 5 October 1996, which committed 48 Governments to work together to ensure the earliest possible conclusion of a legally binding international agreement to ban anti-personnel landmines.

3. One of the main objectives of the subprogramme on disarmament is to monitor and assess current and future trends in the field of disarmament and international security to, inter alia, address post-disarmament problems, including the economic and social consequences of disarmament. In this regard the statement by the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries accurately reflects the priorities given to weapons of mass destruction, where the main priority continues to be the ultimate and complete elimination of nuclear weapons.

4. My delegation is particularly pleased that the statement by the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and the subprogramme have accorded conventional disarmament an appropriate priority. As President Nelson Mandela and Foreign Minister Alfred Nzo have recently emphasized, conventional weapons are the cause of most of the death and suffering caused in conflicts around the world today and it is thus important that greater emphasis should be placed on conventional armaments in all disarmament forums and with specific reference to the proliferation of small arms. We agree with the comments by the Secretary-General when he stated in the Supplement to an Agenda for Peace that progress since 1992 in the area of weapons of mass destruction and major weapons systems must be followed by parallel progress in conventional arms, particularly with respect to light weapons (A/50/60-S/1995/1, para. 65).

5. Africa is one of the continents which has suffered the most as a result of the proliferation of light weapons and also the indiscriminate use of anti-personnel landmines. These weapons have had a devastating effect on civil

society after conflicts have ended and have placed severe constraints on reconstruction and development, particularly in rural areas. The scale of the problem is well known and the challenge it poses is significant on a continent with limited resources and great developmental needs.

6. In considering the allocation of resources to disarmament, the United Nations should not only take into account the priority which this necessitates and the high emphasis which is given to it by the entire international community, it should focus on the work which is already being done and still needs to be done by the international community on the future agenda for the elimination of all the weapons of mass destruction and to halt the proliferation of conventional weapons beyond the legitimate requirements of self-defence.

United States of America

[Original: English]

[21 October 1996]

1. The United States finds subprogramme 1.3, Disarmament, of the medium-term plan to be a generally good blueprint and mission statement on which the Department of Political Affairs and the Centre for Disarmament Affairs can base their work for the period 1998-2001.

2. The United States wishes to acknowledge the excellent work done by the Secretariat and especially the Centre for Disarmament Affairs in the disarmament area. Their technical and administrative support of the First Committee, the Disarmament Commission, the various review conferences and the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, have been commendable.

3. We were pleased to see that the medium-term plan has recognized that much has been accomplished on the nuclear disarmament front. We were also pleased to see that the description of subprogramme 1.3 makes specific reference to the need also to focus on conventional disarmament issues. The United States continues to believe that more progress needs to be made on conventional disarmament matters and that the international disarmament agenda should reflect a better balance between conventional and nuclear issues.

4. We have listened carefully to the statement by the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries on subprogramme 1.3 on disarmament. As we understand it, the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries is proposing a separate programme for disarmament in the medium-term plan. Without commenting on the questions of substance that the statement raises, we wonder whether the statement might not reflect some confusion as to the purposes of the medium-term plan. As the United States understands it, the medium-term plan is meant to be a programmatic tool - a statement of mission, if you will - to guide the Secretariat's work for the medium term. Financial and budgetary decisions affecting the Secretariat are supposed to be based on this plan. On the other hand, the proposal by the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries sounds more like a suggested political agenda for the international community to follow on disarmament issues. As such, the United States believes the proposal by the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries may not be relevant to the medium-term plan.

5. On the proposal itself, the United States cannot help but be struck by the great contrast between, on the one hand, the unrestrained emphasis it places on nuclear disarmament and, on the other, the passing, almost secondary reference it makes to the need for conventional disarmament, and even the caution it expresses regarding a possible role for disarmament as a tool of preventive diplomacy and peace-building. This marked contrast appears to reflect a misunderstanding if not an indifference to the real causes of conflict in the post-cold-war era, and in our view, unnecessarily confuses, skews and complicates the goal we all share of making the world a safer place. The contrast, in effect, displays once again a preference (some would say addiction) to the easy rhetoric of nuclear disarmament rather than to the hard work of improving international security.

6. The United States believes that the medium-term plan is a financial planning tool rather than a political statement, and therefore that the First Committee is not the appropriate forum for in-depth discussion of it, nor for the proposals to redraft the programme document prepared by the Secretariat. The Fifth Committee is the proper forum for this, as the General Assembly has recognized by its assignment of the medium-term plan to the Fifth Committee. For this reason, the United States recommends that the report of the Chairman of the First Committee to the Fifth Committee contain a brief summary of the most important elements that have emerged from this debate, along with the written comments submitted to the Chairman, to facilitate the Fifth Committee's consideration of these important questions.

UNITED NATIONS **A**

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Fifty-first session
FIFTH COMMITTEE
Agenda item 114

PROGRAMME PLANNING

Proposed medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001

Letter dated 31 October 1996 from the Chairperson of the Third Committee to the Chairman of the Fifth Committee

Further to my letter to you of 4 October 1996, I have the honour to respond to your letter dated 26 September 1996 regarding agenda item 114 (Programme planning), in which you request the views of the Third Committee on the programmes of the proposed medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001 relevant to the work of the Third Committee.

The Third Committee held a special meeting on 23 October dedicated to a discussion of the item on programme planning. Unfortunately, it was not possible for the Committee to arrive at a consolidated set of comments on any of the programmes. I am therefore annexing to the present letter the views of the members of this Committee, organized under the programme headings for ease of reference.

(Signed) Patricia ESPINOSA
Chairperson
Third Committee
of the General Assembly

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ANNEX

Views of the Third Committee on programmes of the proposed medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001

Comments of a general nature

Group of 77 and China

[Original: English]

[30 October 1996]

1. The Group of 77 and China is pleased to respond to the invitation made by the Chairman of the Fifth Committee regarding agenda item 114, Programme planning, which was allocated to the Fifth Committee. Our Group considers that it is very useful to present our views and priorities on the items allocated to the Third Committee as well as to stress our interest in the positive outcome of the consideration of this issue at the Fifth Committee.

2. It has been recognized that the United Nations has achieved a great deal in terms of policy development over the past five or six years, all this in the context of development and development cooperation. It has also been recognized that development involves the integration of economic, social and environmental concerns. This process of integration, particularly of economic and social development, is very much the task of the Third Committee, as was indicated by the Under-Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development, Mr. Nitin Desai. He emphasized in his statement to the Third Committee that a part of this fresh look at development involves trying to go beyond the North-South rhetoric, towards identifying a basis for development cooperation, a basis for work on development in the United Nations system which rests on shared goals, shared objectives, shared values and shared interests. He emphasized also that the Third Committee has played a crucial role in its areas of activity, and that its role in, inter alia, social development, in the advancement of women and on human rights clearly has a strong component of seeking to identify such shared goals, shared values, shared objectives and shared interests. Another important element in Mr. Desai's statement was his drawing the attention of the Committee to the efforts being made to identify a role for public policy in an environment where Governments are moving increasingly towards a belief in market-based development.

3. He also recognized that the work of the Third Committee on social development issues and on the advancement of women has helped the United Nations to further the efforts towards these goals. In many ways, he said, the great global conferences of the past six years in the United Nations system have been oriented to what we cannot leave to the market. He emphasized that it is the Third Committee which has played a crucial role in injecting into the agenda of the Conferences the focus on improving the condition of the world's women and children, the advancement of women, human rights, the eradication of poverty, employment protection and social integration. He stressed that, even though our

task of policy development is not by any means over, the key issue now is to shift our focus to implementation.

4. In the light of this invaluable assessment of the contribution of the Third Committee to such important questions, it is relevant to emphasize the priorities that our Group may have with respect to the question of programme planning. If the Group decides to limit its support to a few issues, it would be important for delegations themselves to indicate by their own priorities in the matter.

5. The Group of 77 and China is concerned that new and additional resources should be allocated to different programmes in the interest of developing countries in the field of social and economic questions.

Cuba

[Original: Spanish]

1. In general the importance of intergovernmental debate in the process of applying the legislative basis in the preparation and adoption of medium-term programmes deserves to be emphasized.

2. Reference must be made to the primary role of States in the follow-up and implementation of the results of international conferences, including in paragraph 5.6 of subprogramme 5.2 (Advancement of women).

3. Allusions to the provision of technical assistance and advisory services should contain a reference to the principle of consent of States. For example, the wording of paragraphs 12.3 (b) and (c) of programme 12 (Crime prevention and criminal justice) should be amended along these lines.

4. In general we consider that programmes 12, 13 and 21 and subprogrammes 5.2 and 5.4 adequately reflect the priorities included in the legislative basis of items.

5. Special attention within these programmes must be given to activities in support of the basic needs of developing countries in such areas as training, technical assistance and education.

Tunisia

[Original: French]

1. I should like first to reaffirm Tunisia's support for the views expressed by the Chairman of the Group of 77 and China on this subject. I wish, however, also to highlight certain ideas.

2. I am pleased to express here my delegation's satisfaction at the preliminary consideration of questions within the competence of the various

committees of the General Assembly by the committees concerned before they are considered by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions.

3. This approach has two advantages. First, it promotes consultation, dialogue, transparency and thus efficiency. Second, it brings the relevant committees into the decision-making process. In addition, it helps to facilitate the work of the Fifth Committee by preparing the ground and by introducing into decision-making considerations which are not solely administrative and budgetary.

4. While all of us here strive for budgetary stringency and administrative efficiency, we are nonetheless aware that our work is primarily political. Whether dealing with action to combat poverty, social development, advancement of women, children's issues, human rights or other aspects of development, the Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee, as members will agree, has an eminently political brief.

5. We are thus of the view that the concerns which must guide our choices and those of the Fifth Committee cannot be limited to budgetary considerations. In the context of its consideration of item 114, the delegation of Tunisia wishes to recall that development lies at the heart of the mandate of the United Nations system. It must be emphasized in this regard that the maintenance of development programmes is the chief priority for us. The Organization's financial difficulties cannot, in our view, justify attempts to cut back such programmes on the pretext of budgetary stringency.

6. In conclusion, and in view of the importance for our respective countries of the questions which have been submitted to us for consideration by the President of the General Assembly, Tunisia, which, again, supports this decision, requests adequate time for the Third Committee to study properly the items falling within its mandate.

Algeria

[Original: French]

1. My delegation fully associates itself with the statements made by the non-aligned countries and the Group of 77 and China.

2. The delegation of Algeria wishes to begin by stressing the great importance that it attaches to consideration of the item before the Third Committee today, namely, Programme planning, and emphasizes its great interest in certain aspects of the programmes. It particularly welcomes the opportunity thus afforded the Committee to contribute to improvement of the consultative process for the formulation of the medium-term plan, in accordance with the provisions of General Assembly resolution 41/213.

3. The fact that each of the programmes of the proposed medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001 is being submitted to the Main Committees, including the Third Committee, for their consideration, will lead, in my delegation's view, to greater efficiency and closer coordination in the work of our Organization.

International development cooperation and the role assigned to the United Nations system in this area dictate the need for such coordination so as to ensure that purely budgetary considerations, relating ipso facto to financial circumstances do not dash the hopes generated by the resolutions that we are adopting, with particular reference to the humanitarian aspects of economic and social development.

4. The programmes which will constitute the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001 must correspond to the mandates stemming from the resolutions we adopt. In the absence of the cohesion that we all seek in view of the consensus underlying our resolutions, the Third Committee runs the risk of negating the purposes of its own work.

5. The austerity measures resulting from the financial crisis which is affecting our Organization must not, in the view of my delegation, lead to reductions or deletions of activities or programmes whose priority nature we are doing our utmost to emphasize here, without mention of the commitments made on various occasions by our Heads of State or Government at the summits organized in recent years to promote economic and social development and human rights. Accordingly, as with other questions, the Committee must have the time it needs for proper consideration of the proposed programmes, thus making its contribution to serious preparation of the medium-term plan.

6. It goes without saying that any limitation, reduction and/or deletion of activities advocated or sought for the improvement of the humanitarian and social situation in developing countries, in particular, would be tantamount to a desire to perpetuate the highly disquieting situation prevailing in many regions, particularly Africa.

7. The themes of the programmes submitted to us for consideration each reflect a facet or aspect of the priority work which must guide our activities both as envisaged and as implemented in the field.

8. There is no need for my delegation to add, in conclusion, that the interest accorded the right to development should equal that accorded to other human rights, since they are indissociable and indivisible.

Nicaragua

[Original: Spanish]

1. Many will question the purpose of this exercise; others will perhaps be of the view that we must avoid duplication of work and that we should refrain from discussing in the Third Committee matters which fall within the competence of the Fifth Committee.

2. Nevertheless, for my delegation the fact that the Chairman of the Fifth Committee has sought the views of the Third Committee, and still more the fact that we have been given an opportunity to devote a meeting within our programme of work to the expression of our points of view on agenda item 114, Programme planning, is of great importance and significance.

3. This is so because even though this item is considered by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, the Committee for Programme and Coordination and the Economic and Social Council, the Third Committee's perspective on the programmes within its competence, which include, programmes 5, 12, 13, 19 and 21, has a broader political significance, since in the Third Committee all Member States are represented, which is not the case in the bodies referred to above.

4. We believe that this is part of the process of intergovernmental consultation that must exist within the United Nations, in this case between the Second, Third and Fifth Committees, the Economic and Social Council and its functional commissions, as Mr. Desai said recently.

5. The Third Committee is responsible for developing analytically and approving and defining relevant norms so that every one of the United Nations programmes in the social sphere can be implemented. It goes without saying that the results of our work provide the focus and rationale and serve as an institutional framework for the various United Nations social programmes.

6. Accordingly, it is eminently logical that the Fifth Committee should seek the views of both the Second and the Third Committees. We believe that the results of this exchange of views will provide support and a firmer argument for our colleagues in the Fifth Committee when they are called upon to review the budgetary proposals relating to the various programmes, particularly since at this session, there is a tendency to put forward the argument of a financial crisis in order to reduce the budgets of some of the programmes which are of particular interest to developing countries.

7. Accordingly, Nicaragua supports the statements on programme 19, Human rights, made by the Ambassador of Costa Rica on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and by the representative of Colombia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

8. In conclusion, we believe it important to emphasize that, while we are aware of the importance of the need to make some budget cuts so as to move towards a solution to the Organization's financial crisis, the cutting must in no way affect programmes in the economic and social spheres or programmes which are of special interest to developing countries.

9. We must be extremely careful in taking decisions of this kind, which should not be based solely on financial considerations but rather should take into account the political commitments we have made over many years following various world conferences. It seems to us, rather, that we must insist on the importance of compliance with the commitments made regarding the payment of outstanding contributions as one means of helping to resolve the financial crisis facing the Organization, instead of undermining economic and social programmes.

Argentina

[Original: Spanish]

1. My delegation welcomes the invitation by the Chairman of the Fifth Committee regarding agenda item 114 and would like to add some comments to those made by the representative of Costa Rica on behalf of the Group of 77.

2. The Argentine delegation reiterates the importance it attaches to the medium-term plan, which constitutes the main United Nations policy guidelines and provides the framework for the biennial programme budget. It is thus our view that budget reductions cannot be a sufficient justification for setting aside our priorities. My delegation regards the strengthening of the mechanisms for the promotion and protection of human rights as being of the highest importance.

Chile

[Original: Spanish]

1. My delegation supports the statements made by the delegations of Costa Rica and Colombia on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and the Non-Aligned Movement, respectively.

2. The delegation of Chile believes that the proposed medium-term plan constitutes a collective effort to reorient the work of the United Nations system towards the social sector and the human person. We therefore hope that the plan will be approved by the General Assembly.

Ecuador

[Original: Spanish]

1. My delegation welcomed with great interest the letter dated 26 September 1996 from the Chairman of the Fifth Committee addressed to the Chairman of the Third Committee (A/C.3/51/5), in accordance with the proposed improvement of the consultative process for the formulation of the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001, and it has studied carefully the programmes submitted to the Committee for Programme and Coordination.

2. Any process of change involves sacrifices; any transformation is the result of a series of compromises. However, the restructuring process in which we are currently engaged cannot lose sight of the main objectives that unite us.

India

[Original: English]

First of all, we would like to associate ourselves fully with the statement made by Costa Rica on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on programmes 5, 12, 13 and 21 of the medium-term plan and the statement made by Colombia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries on programme 19, Human rights. We also welcome the opportunity to express our views on aspects of the medium-term plan which relate to the work of the Third Committee before the consideration of the item on programme planning in the Fifth Committee.

United States of America

[Original: English]

1. The United States would like to take this opportunity to express, for the record, its views on the programmes of the medium-term plan that have been referred to the Third Committee for comment.

2. The medium-term plan is meant to be a tool in providing substantive programme planning that can then be used in preparing future budgets. Unfortunately, consensus was not reached on the medium-term plan for the years 1998-2001 during the deliberations of the Committee on Programme and Coordination (CPC), yet the budget process for the next biennium has, of necessity, already begun. My delegation wishes to note that a similar fate befell the previous medium-term plan.

3. The United States regrets that this process is not working as it should. In our remarks during the discussion of the medium-term plan at the CPC, we summarized our views, which I would like to briefly report here, for the record. We felt that the CPC should fulfil its role of reviewing both the programme and the budget aspects of the Organization's activities and, through its recommendations, ensuring that activities and resource allocations of the United Nations faithfully reflect the mandates and priorities set by Member States.

4. The document reflecting the work of the CPC (A/51/16 (Part II)), the document of record that has been referred to the Fifth Committee, accurately reflects our substantive views on those programmes. Therefore, we will not repeat our comments on the programmes which the Committee recommended for approval. These are the programmes dealing with crime prevention and criminal justice; international drug control; and protection and assistance to refugees.

Panama

[Original: Spanish]

1. My delegation supports the statement made by Costa Rica on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. The delegation of Panama believes that the consideration of agenda item 114 is of the highest importance to the future of the United

Nations. Document A/51/6 (Perspective), expresses a large measure of confidence that the United Nations can continue to uphold its universality, strengthen its capabilities and harmonize its actions with the mandates issued by the Member States.

2. The reference to the Declaration on the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the United Nations as one of the sources that inspired the Secretariat in the preparation of this document seems relevant to my delegation. That Declaration was adopted by consensus by the General Assembly at its fiftieth session, and its content is attentive to the concerns and proposals which have marked the history of the United Nations for 50 years.

Programme 5. Policy coordination and sustainable development

Nicaragua

[Original: Spanish]

1. My delegation would simply like to reaffirm the importance of programme 5 on policy coordination and sustainable development, especially at a time when that programme, without abandoning the policy development process which has been under implementation over the past several years, is facing the challenge of putting those policies into practice. In our view, now more than ever before, the programme needs to be strengthened and receive the necessary resources to implement all the commitments made at the various world conferences, these being issues of primary importance to developing countries.

2. Nicaragua believes that in paragraph 5.4 (b) of this programme, the words "in particular in the developing countries" should be added after the words "for the enhancement of the effectiveness of operational activities for development".

Subprogramme 5.2. Advancement of women

Group of 77 and China

[Original: English]

In paragraph 5.6, when defining the principal mandate of activities of the Division in the follow-up to Beijing, reference is made to increasing the interaction with civil society, which we support. Nevertheless, in order to complete the idea, there should be a priority reference to the role of the Governments as being primarily responsible at the national level for the implementation of the outcome of the Beijing Conference. The proposal adequately reflects the priorities established in the follow-up to the Conference.

Nicaragua

[Original: Spanish]

With regard to subprogramme 5.2, Advancement of women, my delegation feels an obligation to give its resolute support to the Division for the Advancement of Women, which has responsibility for seeking support for the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. We are very pleased to note the work performed by the Division, especially in ensuring that the gender perspective and focus is taken into consideration not only in activities relating to women, but in the formulation of development policies in general.

Ghana

[Original: English]

1. Permit me to raise an issue which is not even reflected in the paper under consideration. This relates to the issue of the advancement of women and the implementation by the United Nations of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. I should like to know whether anybody in the Secretariat can explain why this was omitted from the list of issues brought to the attention of the Committee. My delegation participated in the debate in the Committee for Programme and Coordination on the issue and it was agreed to ensure that mainstreaming of a gender perspective in the work of the United Nations was reflected in all programmes. That is why we are concerned that the Third Committee has not been given the opportunity to express its views on it in the proposed medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001.

2. Last year, the Secretariat failed to make provision in the programme budget for 1996-1997 to enable the Division for the Advancement of Women to carry out its additional responsibilities and we had difficulty even holding meetings to draft the optional protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

3. Moreover, we wish to place on record our displeasure at the fact that, even when legislative approval was given for the recruitment of staff to strengthen the Division for the Advancement of Women, latter-day imposed measures to deal with the financial crisis of the United Nations did not make it possible, thus preventing the Division from carrying out its programmes as mandated by the Platform for Action.

4. We wish to ensure that this situation is not repeated and that all implementing agencies provide the necessary inputs for all activities relating to the realization of the objectives of the Platform for Action. As has been said before, legislative mandates should be carried out in full. That is the only way to make a difference in the life of women and that is why we think that the issue of the advancement of women and the implementation of the outcome of the Beijing Conference should have been included in this discussion.

Subprogramme 5.3. Social development

Group of 77 and China

[Original: English]

1. In paragraph 5.9, subparagraph (b), when mentioning the activities relating to the assistance to social groups, namely the aged, youth and the disabled, there should be a reference to the family.

2. The proposal adequately reflects the priorities established in the Copenhagen Summit.

3. We must stress the importance that our Group attaches to the work of the Commission on Social Development in the follow-up to the Copenhagen Summit after having been appropriately strengthened when it was decided by the Economic and Social Council that it should meet annually instead of biennially, increase its membership from 32 to 46, and ensure a minimum of eight working days, which is the minimum needed for a better and more efficient fulfilment of its mandate. We are very interested in the availability of resources for this purpose.

Nicaragua

[Original: Spanish]

1. Regarding subprogramme 5.3, Social development, we hope that the recommendation of the Committee for Programme and Coordination to delete the words in brackets in paragraph 5.9 (c) will be accepted.

2. In paragraph 5.4 (d), we would like to see the words "including greater coordination with the Bretton Woods institutions" added at the end.

Programme 12. Crime prevention and criminal justice

Group of 77 and China

[Original: English]

1. In paragraph 12.3 (b), the objective should be stated as "to support the strengthening of", rather than "to strengthen" the capacity of Governments to reform or revise their legislation and criminal justice systems and to establish or strengthen their institutions and mechanisms for the detection, investigation, prosecution and adjudication of various types of crime. That is a sovereign prerogative of the States, while the United Nations system should support and facilitate such efforts. A reference should be made to the principle of the consent of the State to this collaboration.

2. Similarly, in paragraph 12.3 (c), the third sentence, which begins: "The work of the programme will result in improved ...", should read instead: "The work of the programme will enable support to the improvement of ...". In the

same paragraph it is important to add "trafficking and sale of children and their organs" as another form of transnational crime.

Japan

[Original: English]

With regard to programme 12, my delegation is pleased that due attention will be given to firearm regulation measures, in accordance with the programme objectives listed in the proposal of the Secretary-General, since my delegation regards that project as very important to the work of the United Nations in this field.

Programme 13. International drug control

Group of 77 and China

[Original: English]

1. The role of the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) and the Heads of National Drug Law Enforcement Agencies (HONLEA) should be mentioned.

2. In paragraph 13.2, reference should be made to resolutions 49/168 of 23 December 1994 and 50/148 of 21 December 1995, which are an essential part of the mandate of the United Nations programme in the area of international drug control.

3. In paragraph 13.3, in referring to the development of international norms and standards for drug control, reference should be made to "universal acceptance".

Japan

[Original: English]

1. With regard to programme 13, my delegation attaches the greatest importance to the objectives presented in paragraphs 13.6 (d), 13.7 (b) and (c), and 13.8 (a), (b) and (c) for reasons that it has already explained in the Committee for Programme and Coordination. In particular, it hopes that the International Narcotics Control Board will be provided with the resources it needs to fulfil its responsibilities under the international drug control conventions.

2. It is also the understanding of my delegation that crime prevention and the International Drug Control Programme will continue to be priorities of the United Nations in the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001 as they were in the previous medium-term plan.

Programme 19. Human rights

Cuba

[Original: Spanish]

1. We support the efforts of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to reflect in the new proposal the priorities established at the Vienna Conference and in the resolutions of the General Assembly. Special mention should be made of the initiatives which the High Commissioner has carried out personally in the implementation and follow-up of the Declaration on the Right to Development. While we recognize that the proposal constitutes a good basis for discussion, we consider that some outstanding concerns need to be addressed.

2. In paragraph 19.1 the specific reference to principles included in the Vienna Declaration should be avoided if the list is not exhaustive.

3. Paragraph 19.3 (j) does not appear to be appropriate among the list of programme objectives. The inclusion of a human rights dimension in peacekeeping operations has been of a casuistic nature and has not achieved the generalization which would justify its mention among the main objectives of the programme.

4. Subprogramme 19.1 includes too many priority objectives to fulfil adequately its mandate of creating a new Branch whose priority goals would include the right to development.

5. A new balance could be created by establishing a fourth subprogramme. It may be recalled that programme 35 for the period 1992-1997 had four subprogrammes, and we see no good reason for restricting the number of subprogrammes.

6. The role of the Centre for Human Rights as a focal point of the activities for the Decades of indigenous people and to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance may also be recalled. The resources to support these actions would be included in the proposal, in subprogramme 1 itself.

7. In summary, we repeat that this subprogramme includes too many priorities to allow it to carry out the mandate with regard to the right to development established in General Assembly resolution 50/214.

Subprogramme 19.2

8. We do not understand the reasoning used to separate support for treaty bodies from support for special procedures. It should be recalled that they were together in programme 35, subprogramme 1, of the medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997.

9. Paragraph 88 of Part II of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action mentions intergovernmental efforts to avoid unnecessary duplication. We believe that paragraph 19.9 regarding the special procedures of subprogramme 19.3 should

be transferred to subprogramme 19.2, maintaining the same approach as in the above-mentioned programme 35.

10. We would like to emphasize the need to achieve an adequate balance between human rights promotion and protection activities by dedicating the necessary resources to human rights educational activities, technical assistance provided at the request of interested States, support for the Decades to combat racism and in favour of indigenous people and other activities to promote all human rights.

Egypt

[Original: English]

1. During the current session of the General Assembly, Member States will review a report concerning the restructuring of the Centre for Human Rights. The High Commissioner has drafted a report reflecting his proposals for a new structure.

2. The new structure should reflect the priorities and mandates of the United Nations as developed and approved by the legislative bodies of the Organization. The new structure should not reflect new priorities which have not been approved or debated at the appropriate intergovernmental bodies.

3. The new structure places a particular emphasis on field monitoring operations. There is no legislative mandate for engaging in such activities. Monitoring activities are mandated by the legislative bodies, i.e., the Commission on Human Rights, which decides on a case-by-case basis on the appointment of special rapporteurs.

4. There must be a branch in the new structure focusing on the right to development as requested by the General Assembly in its resolution 50/214 of 23 December 1995 - adopted on the recommendation of the Fifth Committee - section 21, paragraphs 36, 37, 38 and 39. The new structure must not ignore such a decision of the General Assembly.

5. The new structure should not delete the advisory services and technical assistance programme by diluting it in a larger branch whose primary function is monitoring. This integration of technical assistance in monitoring can only be explained by the tendency to introduce conditionality into the provision of technical assistance, which means that some Member States will only be offered technical assistance if they agree to accept the posting of United Nations human rights monitors in their country. In addition, the purpose of diluting technical assistance into a branch focusing on monitoring means that the important financial and staff resources allocated by legislative bodies for technical assistance activities will be misused in non-mandated monitoring activities. This integration of technical assistance into monitoring can only serve the objective of further shifting the focus of the human rights programme into the monitoring of civil and political rights by using all the resources of the Centre for Human Rights to achieve this purpose. This dilution of technical assistance into monitoring and subsequently the attempt to abolish the technical

assistance programme is a direct non-compliance with one of the most important priorities established by the World Conference on Human Rights (Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, part II, paras. 66, 67, 68 and 70).

6. The High Commissioner has made the decision to begin the implementation of the new structure despite the rejection by Member States in the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC) at its 30th meeting, on 21 June 1996, of both the content and the structure of the medium-term plan presented to the Committee by the High Commissioner. The medium-term plan of the Centre for Human Rights is the only one not approved by the CPC and it now needs to be debated and considered by the General Assembly in November. The CPC requested the High Commissioner to create a new subprogramme and a corresponding branch on the right to development and requested the separation of technical assistance from special procedures activities, to be placed in separate management units.

7. For the reasons outlined above, the structure must be in the interest of developing countries. Developing countries need to consider both the medium-term plan and the new structure of the Centre for Human Rights during the upcoming discussions in the General Assembly. The new structure cannot be approved without substantive changes and proper consultation in the appropriate intergovernmental bodies.

European Union

[Original: English]

1. The European Union wishes to comment briefly on programme 19 of the proposed medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001. In keeping with our view that consideration of the medium-term plan is primarily a matter for the Fifth Committee, we shall confine ourselves at this stage to general remarks. Our more detailed comments, as well as our views on other programmes, will be conveyed in the Fifth Committee.

2. In accordance with programme planning regulation 4.2, "the medium-term plan shall be a translation of legislative mandates into programmes. Its objectives and strategies shall be derived from the policy orientations and goals set by the intergovernmental organs." In other words, the purpose of the plan is to ensure that proposed activities of the United Nations system are in accordance with the decisions and priorities already established by the Member States. It should not serve as a pretext for revisiting these decisions.

3. In the case of the human rights programme, its mandate derives from Articles 1, 13 and 55 of the Charter of the United Nations; the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action; General Assembly resolution 48/141 of 20 December 1993, by which the Assembly defined the mandate of the High Commissioner for Human Rights; international human rights instruments; and decisions taken by the General Assembly and other policy-making bodies.

4. The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action underlined that all human rights are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated. It added that "the international community must treat human rights globally, in a fair

and equal manner, on the same footing, and with the same emphasis". This principle sets the framework for United Nations action in the field of human rights and must be fully reflected in the medium-term plan. The European Union rejects any suggestion that one might establish a hierarchy of human rights, or that any single human right can be given overarching importance.

5. The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action also contained a strong commitment from the international community to strengthen the human rights machinery of the United Nations to reflect fully the status of human rights as a priority activity of the Organization. The High Commissioner for Human Rights was entrusted with responsibility for implementing this commitment, under the terms of resolution 48/141. In the same resolution the General Assembly also decided that the High Commissioner shall be the official with "principal responsibility for United Nations human rights activities under the direction and authority of the Secretary-General".

6. Following his appointment, the High Commissioner undertook a valuable and necessary review of the workings of the Centre for Human Rights. This required extensive and wide-ranging consultations and involved an external appraisal by a consultancy firm. The result is a restructuring of the Centre and its work which will provide for greater cohesion and effectiveness and enhance its ability to carry out all aspects of its mandate. The most significant innovation is the division of the Centre into three branches. One will have among its primary responsibilities the promotion and protection of the right to development. The second will provide support services and the third will be responsible for programmes and activities.

7. The European Union is satisfied that the restructuring falls entirely within the competence of the High Commissioner and the provisions of General Assembly resolution 50/214 of 23 December 1995.

8. The proposed medium-term plan for programme 19 is in full conformity with the revised structure of the Centre.

9. The European Union is satisfied that the mandate of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the decisions of the General Assembly and other policy-making bodies are fully and accurately reflected in programme 19 of the proposed medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001. We consider that it should be adopted unchanged by the General Assembly.

Nicaragua

[Original: Spanish]

We consider that the work of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights merits the Third Committee's support, as Nicaragua believes that the purpose of the United Nations human rights programme, as specified in programme 19, should be to promote universal enjoyment of all human rights, on the understanding that these are interdependent and mutually reinforcing and must be treated globally in a fair and equal manner, on the same footing,

universally, objectively and non-selectively. We trust that the Fifth Committee will approve the proposal and the resources necessary for this programme.

Brazil

[Original: English]

1. In our view, programme 19 illustrates the key role the High Commissioner for Human Rights has been called to play in promoting international cooperation in the field of human rights. It also reflects an approach based on the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, which emphasizes the interrelated and interdependent nature of all human rights.

2. Brazil actively and constructively participated in the World Conference on Human Rights and has praised the creation of the post of High Commissioner for Human Rights. We have always pointed out, however, that the volume and the complexity of activities of the High Commissioner could not be coped with satisfactorily without adequate support.

3. We are aware of the difficulties and obstacles faced by the High Commissioner, such as reductions in budget and personnel for human rights activities. Those difficulties represent an additional reason to commend his efforts. At a time of scarcity of resources, his proposals reflect a new approach to the organization of work and should enable the better fulfilment of all the mandates assigned to the High Commissioner and the Centre for Human Rights.

4. We support the ongoing restructuring of the Centre for Human Rights, as proposed by the High Commissioner. We are confident that this process will enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the Centre. The three new branches are designed to enable the Centre to respond to its growing challenges, such as the promotion and protection of the right to development. Nevertheless, the interesting point raised by Colombia, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, regarding the question of financial allocations within the branches deserves further consideration.

5. We hope that the efforts of the High Commissioner will attract additional financial support, including from international financial institutions, for activities aimed at strengthening democracy and the rule of law. Brazil attaches great importance to the enhancement of the capacity of the Centre to provide assistance, upon request by interested countries, to national projects aiming at the realization of human rights and the maintenance of the rule of law.

6. We favour the efforts undertaken by the High Commissioner, as the focal point of system-wide attention to human rights, which necessarily include the development dimension. We reiterate our disposition to continue to cooperate with him, in the hope that the universal consensus attained in Vienna may lead, in the near future, to the universal and effective enjoyment of human rights in all parts of the world.

Argentina

[Original: Spanish]

1. We should like to underline our strong support for the human rights bodies and organizations and, especially, for the fundamental task which the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mr. José Ayala Lasso, is performing in the promotion and protection of human rights and in the successful restructuring of the Centre for Human Rights. We understand that this important work requires our strong support and the allocation of additional resources.

2. We should also like to underline how much the Government of Argentina values the work of the High Commissioner's office in matters relating to the right to development.

Non-Aligned Movement

[Original: Spanish]

1. The Non-Aligned Movement participated actively in the various discussions which led to the inclusion of a subprogramme devoted to the right to development in the proposed medium-term plan.

2. Paragraph 6 of resolution 50/184 and paragraph 38 of resolution 50/214, which were adopted by the General Assembly among other resolutions conferring mandates, are the result of the firm commitment of Member States. They had requested the Secretariat to formulate the appropriate programmatic follow-up to the activities to be carried out by the new branch of the Centre for Human Rights, in particular follow-up to the implementation of the Declaration on the Right to Development.

3. On reviewing this programme, we were pleased to see that the question of the right to development has indeed been included in subprogramme 19.1, although in conjunction with other activities, namely "research and analysis".

4. We would have preferred to have a separate subprogramme devoted exclusively to the right to development. If it has to be integrated with other activities, it is absolutely necessary that we know in advance what percentage of resources will be devoted to the programme activity on the right to development. In other words, how much of the structure of subprogramme 19.1 will be devoted to the right to development and how much to research and analysis.

5. Moreover, with regard to the introductory paragraphs, we consider it necessary to express the Movement's position in relation to the contents of paragraphs 19.3 (b) and (j).

6. Paragraph 19.3 (b) should be drawn up with greater precision; in the current text, it is not clearly indicated that a series of organs within the United Nations system have already been given exclusive competence for "a comprehensive and integrated approach to the promotion and protection of human rights". These organs should be specifically mentioned in the paragraph.

7. There is an unacceptable generalization in paragraph 19.3 (j), which deals with the human rights dimension of peacekeeping operations. Although we recognize the need for coordination between peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance operations, it should be reiterated that these activities need to be clearly differentiated. On no account should peacekeeping operations be initiated except in circumstances where the strict interpretation of events indicate, according to the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations, a threat to international peace and security.

Mexico

[Original: Spanish]

My delegation wishes to take advantage of this opportunity to express its strong support for the work of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. In particular, we wish to express our support for the restructuring of the Centre for Human Rights that Mr. Ayala Lasso is carrying out in order to increase its efficiency. We also wish to underline how important it is that the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Centre for Human Rights should be provided with the resources they need to carry out effectively the different activities assigned to them under their respective mandates.

Chile

[Original: Spanish]

My country strongly supports the protection and promotion of human rights, because they are the basis of all democratic systems. We are very pleased to see the restructuring process being carried out by the High Commissioner for Human Rights in compliance with his mandate. We therefore consider that it should be approved without modification by the General Assembly, and in so doing we manifest our support for the work of the High Commissioner.

Venezuela

[Original: Spanish]

1. With respect to programme 19, we support the restructuring programme initiated by the High Commissioner for Human Rights, which takes into account the Organization's budget crisis, the results of the first step of the process and the requirements stipulated by the General Assembly. We agree with the establishment of the three units envisaged by the High Commissioner and are especially pleased that the right to development has been included in subprogramme 19.1. Duplication has therefore been avoided, and a process of simplification and rationalization necessary for coordinated and efficient implementation has begun.

2. My delegation also believes that it is vitally important to have close collaboration between the Centre for Human Rights and the office of the High

Commissioner. It is to be hoped that, within the new administrative structure the Centre will carry out effectively and efficiently the tasks arising out of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action and the mandate of the High Commissioner and will provide the necessary support to the human rights programme.

3. We are also pleased to see that, as the High Commissioner pointed out in his statement of 20 June in the Committee for Programme and Coordination during its thirty-sixth session, this new structure does not necessarily involve a request for new financial resources and is therefore perfectly in keeping with our current financial limitations.

4. My delegation would like to take this opportunity to endorse the statement made on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement during the meeting of the Committee for Programme and Coordination, concerning the content of paragraphs 19.3 (b) and (j). We believe that the bodies which will contribute to the adoption of a comprehensive and integrated approach to the promotion and protection of human rights should be specified. We also reaffirm the need for a clear distinction between peacekeeping operations and humanitarian assistance activities.

5. Finally, we believe that the highest priority must be given to the new administrative structure proposed by the High Commissioner, which must be seen as a reform aimed at increasing the effectiveness of United Nations activities in the human rights field.

Ecuador

[Original: Spanish]

With reference to programme 19, allow me to set out the reasons why my delegation is convinced that the restructuring process undertaken by the High Commissioner for Human Rights is an initiative which must be supported:

(a) The importance and priority of the right to development has been recognized, it being considered one of the basic human rights, in the context of the general principle that all human rights are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated;

(b) There has been effective follow-up to the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, the Declaration on the Right to Development, the commitment undertaken by our Heads of State and Government in the Declaration on the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the United Nations and the various resolutions of the General Assembly and other United Nations bodies;

(c) Adjustment to the constraints imposed by the financial crisis of the United Nations is evident, since the High Commissioner has stressed that additional savings have been realized in the already reduced budget allocated to human rights;

(d) The 14 objectives set out in the proposed medium-term plan duly reflect the new structure of the Centre for Human Rights and represent a true challenge for the High Commissioner.

Canada, Australia and New Zealand (CANZ Group)

[Original: English]

1. The CANZ Group supports approval of the proposed medium-term plan for human rights for the period 1998-2001, as outlined in document A/51/6 (Prog. 19). We support the efforts of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Centre for Human Rights. Much necessary and good work has been done already and we urge that this process be completed.

2. The CANZ Group of countries believe that it is essential that the High Commissioner and the Centre be provided with adequate human and financial resources for the fulfilment of their important tasks.

Dominican Republic

[Original: Spanish]

1. The delegation of the Dominican Republic supports the statement made by the representative of Costa Rica, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and has comments on programme 19 of the proposed medium-term plan contained in document A/51/6.

2. In creating the post of High Commissioner, the General Assembly conferred on Mr. Ayala Lasso responsibility for supervising the Centre for Human Rights and for rationalizing, adapting, strengthening and simplifying the United Nations machinery for human rights with a view to improving its efficiency and effectiveness. Following a study of the programming and administrative practices in the Centre's secretariat, a restructuring plan was drawn up with the full participation of the High Commissioner, the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights and the staff of the Centre, in coordination with the central administration. As can be seen from the plan, the restructuring is not an end in itself but rather the beginning of a process to reform the Centre for Human Rights with a view to increasing the flexibility and efficiency of United Nations activities in the human rights field.

Costa Rica

[Original: Spanish]

1. My delegation attaches vital importance to programme 19.1, given that the purpose of the United Nations human rights programmes is to promote universal enjoyment of all human rights by giving practical effect to the commitments undertaken by the international community in Articles 1, 13 and 55 of the Charter of the United Nations and in the Vienna Declaration and Programme of

Action adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights and endorsed by General Assembly resolution 48/121 of 20 December 1993. For my delegation this represented the attainment of a goal first stated in 1964: that the office of a United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights should be created. We were therefore especially gratified by the adoption without a vote of resolution 48/141 on 20 December 1993, which established, after a 29 years' delay, the post of United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and laid down his mandate. The programme is based on the principles of the Vienna Declaration, including the principle that democracy, development and respect for human rights are interdependent and mutually reinforcing and that all human rights are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated and must be treated globally in a fair and equal manner, on the same footing and with the same emphasis, universally, objectively and non-selectively. We are pleased that the programme is under the responsibility of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and that its objectives include providing leadership on human rights issues, emphasizing the importance of human rights on the international and national agendas, promoting international cooperation for human rights, stimulating and coordinating action across the whole United Nations system and, finally, the series of important issues set out in paragraph 19.2 of document A/51/6 (Programme 19). We would, however, highlight the last part of that paragraph, which emphasizes preventive action and promoting the establishment of national human rights infrastructures, developing field activities and operations and providing education, information, advisory services and technical assistance in the area of human rights. We are pleased to see that emphasis is being given to this component, and not merely to protection, because such an important part of the programme requires support from all quarters if there is to be a positive outcome.

2. Paragraph 19.3 sets out expectations for the end of the period covered by the plan and states what results are aimed at. My delegation welcomes all the paragraphs of the plan, from (a) to (n), which we consider very pertinent and necessary, but we should like to highlight (i) on programmes to assist States, (j) on the inclusion of a human rights dimension, as appropriate, in peacekeeping operations, (k) on the full integration of the human rights of women and the girl child in the activities of the United Nations system as a whole and its human rights machinery in particular, and (m) on the establishment of effective programmes of education and public information and the strengthened participation of non-governmental organizations, national institutions, and civil society in United Nations human rights activities at all levels.

3. We have been very satisfied with the efficiency and dedication shown by the High Commissioner, Mr. Ayala Lasso, in carrying out his mandate. The General Assembly showed its confidence in him through the positive statements made by many delegations from the various groups and regions of the world when the resolution creating his position was adopted. We are now able to see him in action, as he interprets and discharges his mandate, despite the difficulty of carrying out his many, sensitive responsibilities with inadequate financial and human resources. My delegation would like to record its appreciation of his unflagging efforts and express the hope that some means may be found to provide him with the support he needs to fulfil his many obligations.

4. I will be brief, given the time constraints, but I should like to add that we support subprogramme 19.1, Right to development, research and analysis, and paragraphs 19.4, 19.5 and 19.6 in their entirety.

5. We also support subprogramme 19.2, Supporting human rights bodies and organs, the content of paragraph 19.7 and subprogramme 19.3, Advisory services, technical cooperation, support to human rights fact-finding procedures and field activities, covered in paragraphs 19.8, 19.9 and 19.10, which complete this valuable and vital programme, whose purpose is to ensure that universal respect for and enjoyment and implementation of human rights are achieved and become a wonderful reality at the dawn of the new millennium.

India

[Original: English]

1. At the meetings of the Committee for Programme and Coordination in July/July and September 1996, our delegation had made known its views on certain aspects of the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2000 which were unclear to us. These related, among other things, to the possibility that the right to development might not get the attention that was mandated to it under resolution 50/214 among the various responsibilities of the unit entrusted with the "right to development, research and analysis" in the restructured Centre for Human Rights, to the efficacy of a functional, across-the-board approach over the thematic approach in the restructuring process, and to other specific issues relating to the programme such as paragraph 19 (j) dealing with human rights and peacekeeping. I need not belabour these as they have already been expressed in the statement made by Colombia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries. These observations remain valid but not insurmountable if we remain faithful to the relevant mandates.

2. The fact that we have raised these issues does not mean that we doubt the High Commissioner's sincerity or his commitment to development as providing a superior basis for the enjoyment of human rights. On the contrary, we would like to assure him of our support. We would like to be sure that the development dimension of human rights is kept firmly in focus. And we would like to see how this understanding informs the implementation of the human rights programme, cross-sectorally, as a whole. We have taken into account the High Commissioner's repeated assurances that the implementation of the right to development is fundamental to his restructuring effort. We note, in particular, the steps he has taken to initiate a dialogue with multilateral and regional financial and economic institutions on the implementation of the right to development. We hope this will be pursued and deepened. We believe that by encouraging a more favourable international environment for development the Centre will actually contribute to human rights as a whole by creating better conditions for promoting social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom. We would also like the technical assistance programme which we regard as a key component of the human rights programme strengthened and given due attention. This too corresponds to the development dimension that we have emphasized.

3. In view of these assurances, it would be fair to allow the High Commissioner the chance to put his commitment to the right to development to practical effect and to judge him by the results of his efforts as he has sought. Financial uncertainty undermines the efficiency of the Secretariat as a whole. The Centre should be able to count on a more secure financial basis from the regular budget so that in implementing the programme it cannot only be independent, but also be seen to be independent of influence or micro-management under financial pressure from any quarter. We should give the High Commissioner this opportunity, and will keenly await the results of his efforts.

United States of America

[Original: English]

Unfortunately, the Committee for Programme and Coordination was notably unable to reach consensus on the medium-term plan for the human rights programme. The United States fully supports the proposed programme as outlined in A/51/6 (Prog. 19). Human rights activities in the United Nations are now and will continue to be a very high priority for the United States. We also support the High Commissioner's restructuring of the Centre. The High Commissioner's restructuring is consistent with relevant General Assembly resolutions on the subject, in particular, resolution 50/214 of 23 December 1995, adopted on the recommendation of the Fifth Committee. We shall be taking this position in the discussion on the Human Rights Centre in the Fifth Committee.

Japan

[Original: English]

While my delegation regrets that the Committee for Programme and Coordination failed to reach a consensus on programme 19 (Human rights), it supports the subprogrammes contained in the proposed medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001. In this regard, although some delegations have expressed concerns about the restructuring of the Centre, some of which may be quite legitimate, my delegation supports the current efforts of the High Commissioner to restructure the Centre, in the hope that this will further improve its management and, as a result, the efficiency of its work.

Panama

[Original: Spanish]

1. With respect to programme 19 (Human rights), my delegation reaffirms its support for the High Commissioner, under whose mandate this programme is. Since his appointment Mr. Ayala Lasso has successfully discharged some of the allotted tasks, while others remain at the stage of promises. As regards the latter category, my delegation renews its willingness to cooperate and recognizes that the successful completion of this programme depends on the cooperation of Member States.

2. All action concerned with human rights requires the development of a genuine human rights practice and a genuine human rights code of ethics. In addition, there must be the necessary objectivity and rigour to safeguard the independence in human rights terms of any thought or any individual interpretation of reality.

3. For the United Nations the challenge during the years ahead will be to build and promote human rights action that both upholds standards and receives the political and financial backing of Governments and civil society. The norms which the United Nations has established have their roots in the public opinion of its peoples. The Charter of the United Nations is very clear on this point: "We the peoples of the United Nations ...".

4. The proposed human rights programme introduces innovations which, in our opinion, tend to affirm more strongly the presence of the United Nations, in keeping with the specificity of its role, in the development of new categories of human rights and the systematic promotion of the teaching and dissemination of human rights. The expectations in the matter of anticipating serious violations and the reaction to such violations are also innovative.

5. My delegation considers that the proposed programme should be accompanied by a strengthening and rationalization of existing United Nations structures, since this would be the only way of ensuring that United Nations action can deal adequately with the ethical problems generated by the growing complexity of life in society and is on a par with the advances in science and technology. In a word, my delegation is in favour of strengthening the human rights capabilities of the United Nations.

Ghana

[Original: English]

1. With regard to programme 19, Human rights, we wish to reiterate our support for the principles enunciated in the Vienna Declaration that human rights are interdependent, mutually reinforcing, indivisible and interrelated and should therefore be treated in an equal manner and in a spirit that respects objectivity and non-selectivity.

2. In this connection, my delegation fully supports the work of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the restructuring he is carrying out at the Centre to give full meaning to the whole spectrum of human rights concerns in the United Nations system.

3. For some time now, there has been a continuous attempt to emphasize one set of human rights at the expense of the other and we see the new attention given to economic and social rights, and in particular the right to development, as a worthy effort to balance human rights concerns in keeping with the Vienna Declaration. This is why we support subprogramme 19.1 and agree with the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries that it should be a separate sub-group exclusively focused on the issue of development.

Islamic Republic of Iran

[Original: English]

Regarding the proposed medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001 (Programme 19. Human rights), my delegation presented its viewpoints thoroughly at the meeting of the Committee for Programme and Coordination on 21 June 1996, and therefore I am not going to repeat those views, which were largely shared by a considerable number of delegations.

South Africa

[Original: English]

1. My delegation wishes to raise briefly a few points about programme 19:

2. The High Commissioner for Human Rights was given a mandate by the General Assembly, a mandate he prudently engineered amidst the difficult circumstances facing his good office. His proposals are products of two years of study and debate within the Centre. In many ways the proposals mirror the debate about the reform of the United Nations in general. It should therefore come as no surprise that they have been accompanied by controversy.

3. It is our sincere belief that the Centre was in need of restructuring and was unable to meet its commitments either to States, to treaty bodies or to special rapporteurs. The changes proposed will allow the High Commissioner to respond more rapidly and substantively to crisis situations.

4. In sum, the proposals should be seen as a good-faith attempt by the High Commissioner to respond better to current realities. Many officials talk about United Nations reform but so far the High Commissioner is one of the few senior officials to have undertaken any radical action. It should also be recalled that the Centre continues to suffer from inadequate financial and personnel resources. We either have to ameliorate this burden or to perpetuate it.

5. In view of the fact that the High Commissioner's proposals are not cast in stone, we urge all Member States to give the High Commissioner their maximum and unqualified support. If his proposals fail, which is unlikely, it should not be because of lack of cooperation from Member States.

6. Finally, the debate about the controversy which rages over the substantive elements of the new structure should take place during the time allocated to the debate on human rights.

Indonesia

[Original: English]

With regard to programme 19, the position of my delegation has been clearly stated during the session of the Committee for Programme and Coordination in

July 1996. Many delegations from the developing countries have also expressed their views, particularly on the issue of the right to development. I strongly believe that the Secretariat will reflect the views and position of the developing countries in its communication to the Fifth Committee.

Programme 21. Protection and assistance to refugees

Group of 77 and China

[Original: English]

The programme has been prepared respecting the legislative basis applicable to this area. We support the content of the proposal since it maintains an integral criteria in the approach to the attention of refugees.